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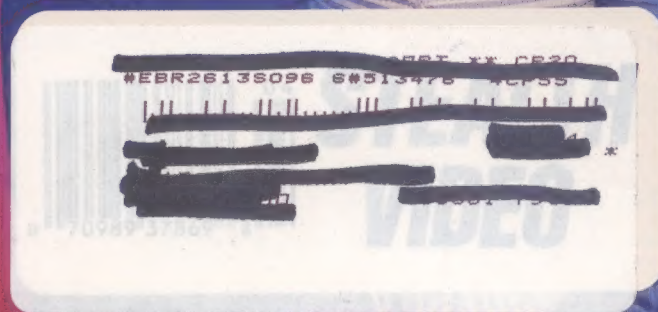
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Blank 8mm,
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Fine Tune Your
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VIDEOTESTS

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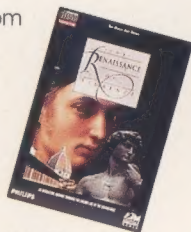
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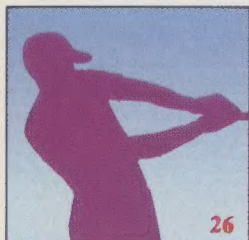
Another First From Philips



PHILIPS

VIDEO

magazine



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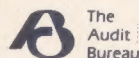
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Cover:
Sony's CCD-TR101 and
Hitachi's VM-H39A cure
handheld shake with
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Vittorio Sartor.

Video Magazine
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VIDEO ADVERTISER Q&A

David Tabas, Dir. of Sales for SIMA Products, talks about entry-level editors.

Q What is the advantage of using a dedicated editor as opposed to using the editing features built into camcorders and VCRs?

A When you really want to edit and you use a separate editor, you don't have to do it on the spot. You look at the whole scene before the edit and add audio at the same time. You can also enhance the quality level of the video. You are really editing to make a copy — a better copy that features improved image quality and content — and dedicated editors help you accomplish this.

Q What features and capabilities should you look for in an entry-level editor?

A Audio mixing, fade-to-black, and bypass functions are all very important features. An average buyer should look for a unit that is easy to hook-up and easy to use. All of our instructions are only one page long. A buyer should also look for compatibility with any equipment that they already own.

Q Is it better for an amateur editor to buy an all-in-one unit or buy a series of separate units?

A Most editors come with audio mixing capabilities, so a separate audio mixer is probably not necessary. Most editors do not have character generators and the ones that do are expensive. So I think it is better to build as you go. This way you can start small and grow into a larger system.

Q What is the current trend in entry-level A/V editors?

A Features more commonly found are color wipes, bypass buttons, cross-fading capabilities, and color processing with enhancement all on the same editor.

CHANNEL ONE

Defining multimedia

Everywhere we went at this year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show (see "Technology Roulette" for a full report), there was a buzz about "multimedia." For the thousands of retailers gathered in Las Vegas, multimedia holds the promise of a new industry about to be born, with a range of exciting new products for their store shelves—if only they can figure out what multimedia is, then how to promote and sell it. They're not the only ones who are confused. For most consumers, multimedia remains a puzzlement, a welter of incompatible formats and dizzying acronyms in search of compelling applications. About all that's clear is that these products are "media" (and "multi"), but it's still unclear what will attract consumers in large numbers.

At the CES press conferences announcing their companies' new entries into the fray, executives of Pioneer and 3DO, as is customary, touted their products as potential standard bearers that would eliminate consumer confusion. But still multimedia means different things to different people. Here are a few suggestions we think may disperse a bit of the fog:

First, let's change the name of the product category and use terms that reflect what products do for their users—not tell them how it was made. Multimedia, an adjective borrowed from and still employed by the computer industry, is inherently confusing for some folks because it describes a creative process, not a consumer use pattern.

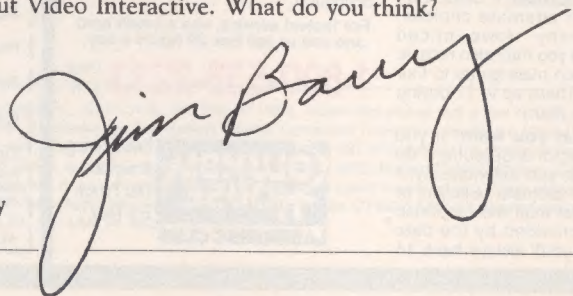
What is commonly called multimedia is simply interactive home video—programs that let users influence the action, change the sequence of events and otherwise interact with what they're watching. Philips is halfway there with its CD-I moniker and Pioneer's new LaserActive label is also heading in the right direction, while Tandy is close with the name Video Information System. We're not endorsing any interactive format here, but we think Video Interactive (VI or VIS) would make a clear term the industry could accept for this category, making it simple for purchasers to see that the disc they're buying is not a linear program like a videotape, but interactive.

Second, let's keep working hard to establish standards. Let's at least get products that connect to the same display devices, preferably the television set. Ultimately, the marketplace will decide the standard, as it did with VHS, but consumers need a relatively limited number of options to choose from, not dozens of incompatible formats.

Third, let's stop thinking of Video Interactive as "the next VCR" and promote the unique benefits interactivity brings to viewers in terms of entertainment, learning and, yes, game playing.

Finally, let's stop talking about "full-motion video" as though it is something exotic and the key to a sales boom. Video Interactive should have 30-frames-per-second video as a given. Period. But this alone will not be the secret of its success.

There's a great future for interactive home video, but we all need to learn more about the technology and what it can do for us—and now is the time to start. These are a few ideas we think might cut through some of the consumer confusion about Video Interactive. What do you think?



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FEEDBACK

TV for squares

I am writing to encourage Dr. John E. Johnson Jr. and John E. Johnson Sr. ("Off the Air," Dec. '92) to seek membership in the Flat Earth Society. The idea that HDTV sacrifices image area as compared to NTSC is absurd. Like 4:3 sets, 16:9 HDTV sets are measured diagonally, but this is not the best dimension to use to compare the two systems. The alternative, acceptable to everyone but the Johnsons, is to compare HDTV and NTSC sets on the basis of equal screen heights. Using this dimension, HDTV provides a third more screen area. Of course, the Johnsons might try to compare the systems on the basis of screen width, which works in favor of NTSC. Perhaps they'd be better served by turning their HDTV set on its side.

Timothy W. Bird
Plainsboro, New Jersey

Tube tiff

Before any readers run out to buy the Sony KV-32XBR95 you raved about in the January "Videotests," I caution them to check the set prior to purchase for geometric distortion by putting a crosshatch or similar test pattern on the screen. All three samples I've seen had excessive distortion.

Steve Edwards
Nashville, Tennessee

The January '93 issue with your "Videotest" on the new Sony XBR² television arrived in my mailbox on the same day I accepted delivery on the 32-inch XBR95S. This phenomenal set is everything you claimed and more.

Richard J. Walsh
Denville, New Jersey

Editor's reply: While all direct-view sets suffer from geometric distortion to some degree, the distortion on the Sony set we tested was not excessive.

A day of music

Much of my music collection dates back to the early days of so-called hi-fi, and consists of reel-to-reel tapes and 33 rpm LPs. Since these media have started to die out, in self-defense I acquired a Sony



Around the Clock: Sony's EV-S800 8mm VCR can record four hours of music on each of six PCM tracks.

EV-S800 8mm VCR, which includes a multidigital audio recording feature. I've now transferred my entire music library to 8mm tape and I'm quite happy with the results. Since each tape holds 24 hours of music, my collection is now very compact, and it certainly weighs a lot less. My new concern is that new Sony VCRs do not have multidigital audio recording, and that I may be stranded again.

Reinhold Braun
Laguna Hills, California

Editor's reply: Since multidigital recording adds to the price of a VCR and is not used by a large number of people, the feature has not been on newer models. We expect it to be included on some models in the future.

1,000 blinking lights

I note that in Frank Beacham's comments on Clinton's high-tech take on video's future ("Off the Air," Jan. '93), Al Gore is listed as Clinton's high-tech point man. A news article reported that Gore solved the blinking clock light problem on his VCR by placing tape over it. If this is true, we are going to have some real high-tech talent in this new administration.

Ivan R. Ferry
Newport News, Virginia

For the record

February's review of *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* erroneously stated that the video edition of the film is missing a scene.

Video Magazine welcomes your comments. Address correspondence to Feedback, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

GAZETTE

To the Player go the spoils

In spring, the public's fancy always turns to Hollywood as star-studded awards shows seize the airwaves and front pages of America. If this year's festivities seem a little less glitzy than usual, it may just be another sign of the responsible, socially conscious '90s—or you can chalk it up to the timely March 31 video release (on New Line cassettes and Criterion laserdiscs) of maverick director Robert Altman's scathing movie-biz satire, *The Player*.

The Player skewers Hollywood conventions, from designer bottled water to bigger targets like the happy endings cynically grafted onto so many movies. It focuses on Tinseltown's greedy and restrictive studio system, which Altman and writer/co-producer Michael Tolkin present as the ultimate scourge of honest expression in film.

Making shady deals, pandering to audiences and eventually committing murder is fictional studio executive Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins) in *The Player*. But Robbins, who recently made his directorial debut with another biting satire, *Bob Roberts*, knew his character had to be much more than a typical movie villain if *The Player* was to succeed.

"I resent going to movies where you know who the bad guy is in the first five minutes," Robbins told us. "Then it's just a matter of waiting two hours before good triumphs over evil. But life's not like that—bad people can be found smiling from the front page of newspapers, charming the media over to their side.

We're in a society that worships image over substance. That's partly what my choices in playing this character were about."

Robbins had some help in this cinematic assault on Hollywood. More than 60 of film's biggest stars—from Jack Lemmon to Cher—showed up to play themselves as "extras" in *The Player*. Amazingly, director Altman (Nashville, M*A*S*H) found it easy to get Hollywood's finest involved in biting the hand that feeds them.

"I had to call each of them to ask for

essential Hollywood outsider. He's had some trouble getting his latest project off the ground.

"It's called *L.A. Shortcuts*, and it's based on several Raymond Carver short stories," Altman says. "It's got a Nashville-type structure, but with 27 name actors—Laura Dern, Lily Tomlin—all people you've seen before. With so many characters, the familiar faces help audiences keep the stories straight. But I haven't been able to get anyone to finance it. The U.S. distributors say they don't think it's going to be a commercial

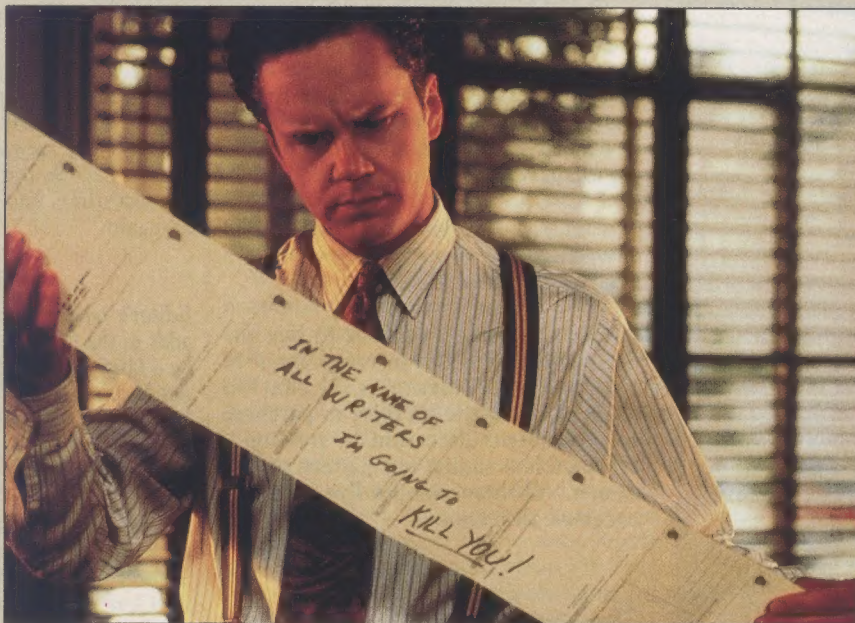
picture." But what of *The Player*'s substantial success? The old rules still apply: "It just doesn't make a bit of difference." —KK

Pickin' and grinnin'

Audio/videophiles vary widely in their musical tastes—one might be a fanatic for Wagnerian opera while the next swears by Guns N' Roses. But there's one musician who seems to fascinate all of them—Les

Paul. In the same way that most *Video Magazine* readers are into movies, music and the gear they use to experience them, Les Paul has spent his life pursuing both artistic and technical goals with equal fervor.

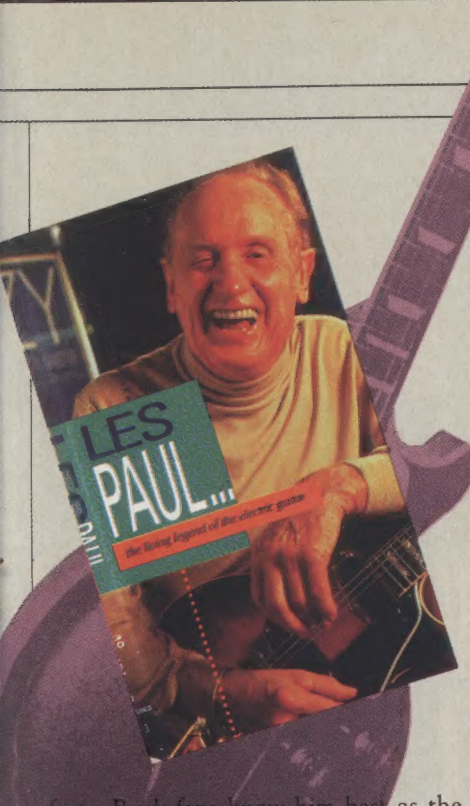
Paul was one of the most successful guitarists of the '40s and '50s. He played with Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters, he created a long string of hits with his wife, the late singer Mary Ford, and he eventually won five Grammy awards. And he may have influenced music recording more than anyone since Thomas Edison. His technical innovations include multitrack recording, the solid-body electric guitar, sound synthesis and many now-common sound ef-



Rough Business: Studio executive Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins) opens his fan mail in *The Player*.

an appearance," Altman explains, "and they all responded with a surprising lack of paranoia. We paid them scale, and all that money went to the motion picture relief fund. I think they did it to say, 'Yeah, I want to raise my hand.' And that's why the film's been so well-received—audiences see it as saying, 'Down with greed.'" Robbins' reasoning for accepting his role provides another possible explanation for the presence of all these stars: "I read the script, and I knew Altman was involved—that's all I needed to know."

Moviedom's brightest talents may be willing to drop whatever they're doing to help Mr. Altman, but things don't appear to be changing much for this quin-



fects. Rock fans know him best as the name on the headstock of a guitar, the famous Les Paul Standard played by legends like Jimmy Page and Jeff Beck.

Paul's life and music are beautifully portrayed in a new video, *Les Paul: The Living Legend of the Electric Guitar* (BMG cassettes and laserdiscs). It begins with a primer on his achievements, then offers clips from a performance at Fat Tuesday's, his regular Monday-night gig in New York City. The music segments alternate with snippets of an interview by Jeff Baxter, former guitarist with the Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan. The video is sure to fascinate jazz lovers, musicians, '50s pop music fans and audio technophiles. If you fit into one of the first three categories, you'll find enough depth in the music segments to inspire many repeat viewings—the ultimate test of any music video.

One of the video's biggest treats is old TV footage of Paul and Ford in musical vignettes. Paul provided the film for these from his extensive collection of his past work. "Mary and I made 170 shows from our home for Listerine," he explains. "They bought us a house in Jersey and I built a film and recording studio. We were on TV five times a week for seven years. It was one hell of a hard job!"

Paul's performance style—mostly sensitive renditions of old standards, augmented by his lightning-fast licks and constant clowning around—is perfectly suited for video. "I've always been an entertainer. Guys like Miles Davis created something new and got people to like it eventually, but I like to give the people what they want."

Don't expect this video to serve as

TIMESHIFT

TEN YEARS AGO IN VIDEO MAGAZINE

"Is the new **Beta Hi-Fi** audio system enough to put Beta back on track, especially against the seemingly irreversible tidal wave of VHS? Indeed, is state-of-the-art stereo sound important to enough people to make it matter?...**1982 was quite a year** for movies. With so many top-flight performances and films, the academy should seriously consider expanding the number of nominations in certain categories. Among '82's hottest new stars were Jessica Lange, Kevin Kline and Eddie Murphy...Will 1982's **hottest leisure trend** be 1983's cable-TV sensation? That's what Playcable and the Games Network are wagering. The two companies are using cable systems to deliver some programs directly to subscribers, eliminating the need for individual game cartridges...**New video releases** this month include *Blade Runner*, *The Road Warrior*, *Das Boot*, *Diva* and *Last Tango in Paris*." ■ **April 1983**



Paul's swan song—even at age 77, he's still as active as ever. And the technology of the '90s hasn't passed him by. "Right now we're building a recording studio and a video studio, I'm writing a book and I'm inventing an unusual new guitar," he reports.

—Brent Butterworth

The lion roars again

Anyone impressed with the Technicolor restoration and half-dozen unused songs presented in MGM/UA's recent *An*

American in Paris CAV laserdisc set hasn't seen anything yet, at least according to MGM senior vice president George Feltenstein. *An American in Paris* is only the first installment in a treasure-trove of special editions to be released by the company in the coming years.

"We're already doing Technicolor restoration on the major MGM titles that have needed it—*Quo Vadis* has just been released, and *Ivanhoe* will be available in the middle of the year," Feltenstein says. But that's not all: MGM was "notorious" for shooting musical numbers that didn't make it into the final cut of the films they were made for. "The people at Turner have become much more open to allowing us to use cut scenes and songs, and all of that extra material still exists," Feltenstein says.

How times change. When Ted Turner bought the MGM and prewar Warner Bros. libraries in 1986, most movie mavens considered it a dark day—Turner was only interested in exploiting the films' profit potential through traditional means, or so the reasoning went. But thanks to the public's healthy response to reissues of *Gone With the Wind* and *Casablanca*, Turner has become keen on using the footage in its vaults.

Some of this material will show up



Disc Deluxe: A special edition of *Ivanhoe*, starring Robert Taylor and Elizabeth Taylor, is in the works.

on individual special editions—Feltenstein mentioned *For Me and My Gal*, Gene Kelly's Hollywood debut (alongside Judy Garland), and *Good News*, the 1947 musical satire of 1920s college life. Much more lost footage will appear in the upcoming *That's Entertainment, Part 3*, the first film in the series to take advantage of the fact that the MGM and Turner libraries are now controlled by the same company. —Bruce Eder

HBO

SATELLITE SERVICES, INC.

NEWS

April 1993

Number Four

Are you looking to enhance the quality of your television viewing? If so, a home satellite system offers you the finest in audio and video reception plus the widest variety of programming choices. And if you are looking for the best in satellite television entertainment, look no further than HBO Satellite Services. You'll get more hit movies, top-notch comedy, superstar concerts, sporting events, and original movies on HBO and Cinemax than anywhere else.

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GAZETTE

Video Flashes

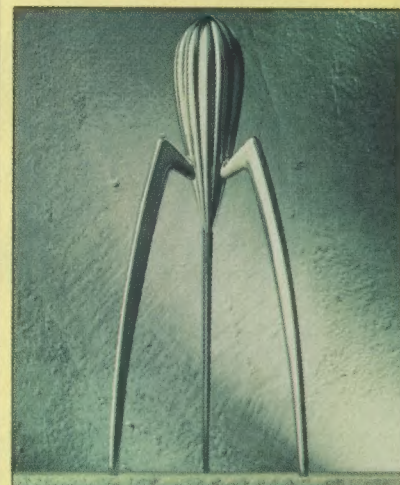
MANY HAVE predicted the advent of movies recorded on CD, but two companies have finally demonstrated full-motion video systems for five-inch discs that provide high-quality images. JVC recently showed CDs with video recorded using an extended version of the MPEG-1 compression system. It plans to develop a video CD player using the MPEG-2 standard when the standard is approved late this year. The new player will provide 74 minutes of video, but thanks to faster rotation speeds and narrower tracks, will provide a data rate four times higher. This type of system could produce a laserdisc-quality picture. The company may also develop a video version of Sony's MiniDisc.

Meanwhile, Nimbus, a British record company, demonstrated a new technology that squeezes a full-length film onto a single CD that can be played on conventional CD players. The new format doubles the density of information on a CD by reducing the size of the pits and the space between tracks, both to a degree that many current CD players could compensate for automatically, without adjustment. The CD player feeds an MPEG-based full-motion video adapter through the player's digital output.

THE INTRODUCTION OF HDTV could be set back by as much as a year or set on an entirely new course due to the recommendation of a special committee conducting tests for the FCC. The committee decided that four of the five competing HDTV systems should be retested. A fifth competitor, Japan's NHK, withdrew its analog system from the tests when it became evident a digital system was preferred. At presstime, backers of the four remaining systems are discussing ways to merge their systems into one.

FAMED FRENCH DESIGNER Philippe Starck has been hired by Thomson Consumer Electronics to put his unique stamp on its products. Starck is renowned for a distinctive, edgy style that has been applied to everything from lemon squeezers to hotels. What's in store for Thomson, which owns RCA and its broad lines of TVs, VCRs, camcorders and the like? According to Starck, "Human

warmth should replace the esthetic, generosity displace strategy so that technology can at last embrace us and material objects recover their essence." Moreover, predicts Starck, "I will at last be able to answer the French poet's question, which so obsessed my tumultuous school years: Inanimate objects, have you a soul?"



Starck Reality: This lemon squeezer by Philippe Starck may signify big changes for RCA products.

WE'VE BEEN HEARING MUCH talk about HDTV broadcasts, but little about how we'll record them. Hitachi, Sony and JVC recently broke the silence with dramatic demonstrations of HDTV VCRs.

Sony and Hitachi showed prototypes of digital HDTV VCRs. Hitachi's uses a tape similar in appearance to a VHS cassette. The company used the deck to demonstrate a new technology for providing visible search, a feat previously impossible for digital decks playing compressed video. Sony wouldn't divulge the size of its new format because it hasn't been finished, but said the new cassette could be smaller than an 8mm cassette, perhaps using 6mm or 4mm tape. Both decks displayed images recorded in the HDTV system proposed by the Advanced Television Research Consortium, which includes Thomson, Philips, NBC and Sarnoff Labs.

To maintain compatibility with VHS, JVC plans an analog HDTV VCR that uses high-quality, half-inch tape in an improved VHS shell. The new format is called W-VHS. W-VHS decks will play VHS tapes recorded in NTSC as well as HDTV tapes recorded in whatever system is chosen for the U.S. JVC says analog HDTV decks will be much less expensive than digital decks.

THE 9TH ANNUAL VISIONS OF U.S. VIDEO CONTEST

VISIONS

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sponsored by Sony Corporation of
America and administered by
The American Film Institute.



VIDEOTESTS

Tops From Thomson:
The ProScan PS27121 is the top-of-the-line 27-inch TV from Thomson Consumer Electronics, maker of RCA and GE TVs.



VIDEOTEST
677

PROSCAN 27-inch TV set

7,000 Kelvins (the color produced by heating magnesium to that temperature), but newer sets often have color temperatures as high as 10,000 Kelvins. This produces a bluer, brighter picture, at the expense of accuracy. Manufacturers have apparently upped color tem-

The greatest current controversy among videophiles centers on the color temperature of video monitors, which has increased dramatically over the last couple of years. Many older consumer sets have color temperatures of about

7,000 Kelvins (the color produced by heating magnesium to that temperature), but newer sets often have color temperatures as high as 10,000 Kelvins. This produces a bluer, brighter picture, at the expense of accuracy. Manufacturers have apparently upped color tem-

ProScan PS27121 27-Inch TV

Price: \$899

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 92 lbs.; 23-1/4 x 26 x 18-1/2 inches

Screen Size: 27 inches diagonally

Speaker Size: two—2-1/4 x 5 inches

Type of Tuning: quartz-controlled frequency synthesis

Method of Tuning: programmable scan on set and simple remote, scan plus direct access on full remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels—A-8, 2 to 13, A to I, J to W, W+1 to W+28, W+29 to W+58, A-5 to A-1, W+59 to W+84

Remote Control: two IR wireless—simplified remote with buttons for power, channel up, channel down, volume up/+ adjust, volume down/- adjust, and menu; universal remote with buttons for TV on, system off/on, channel up, channel down, volume up, volume down, 10-digit keypad, input,

commercial skip, previous channel, mute, menu, -, +, ID, antenna, program, clear, display, play, pause, stop, rewind, FF, record, PIP, swap, freeze and move

Inputs: S-video, 2 video/stereo audio, antenna A & B

Outputs: select video, fixed-level select audio, variable-level select audio, speakers (external or surround)

Internal Audio Amplifier Power: 5 W/ch RMS into 8 ohms with less than 1% THD

Special Features: PIP, headphone jack, simple remote

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 560 lines

Picture S/N (dB): luminance—54.3, video—52.2, chroma AM—61.2, chroma PM—62.1

Color Temperature: 7,000 Kelvins

Accuracy of Colors: very good/excellent

Audio Frequency Response: audio outputs—20 Hz-5 kHz,

peratures because the brighter picture helps the sets stand out on the show floor.

Professional monitors like the Sony XBR Pro we use as a reference are calibrated to 6,500 Kelvins. Compared with consumer sets, the picture looks redder, but it produces perfect NTSC color and every shade from black to gray to white without color contamination.

ProScan is one of the few consumer direct-view TV sets we know of that can deliver color close to pro standards. Out of the box, the 27-inch PS27121 reviewed here delivers ■ color

continued on page 22

HIGHLIGHTS

Videophiles are tough to please, and often disagree. One of the few recent products many agree on is the ProScan monitor. This upscale brand from Thomson Consumer Electronics is winning acclaim from video purists for its ability to reproduce NTSC color accurately. It has most of the high-end features videophiles demand, like picture-in-picture, a versatile jack pack and a second, simplified remote. Picture quality is very good to excellent, audio quality is good and ease of use is good to very good, for an overall very good rating. If you want to see a picture more like the ones pros see, check out this \$899 set.

+0.4/-3 dB, -8.3 dB at 20 kHz; speaker terminals—20 Hz-7.5 kHz, +2.1/-3 dB, -6.9 dB at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: variable
line out—68.1 dB

Total Harmonic Distortion: variable line out—0.6%

RATINGS

Picture:
very good/excellent

Audio: good

Ease of Use:
good/very good

Overall: very good

VIDEOTEST
678

MITSUBISHI S-VHS VCR

Mitsubishi's HS-U67 is one of the few VCRs we've seen that successfully straddles the line between editing and home theater—it performs superbly in both applications.

For editing, it has dual flying erase heads that cut super-smooth transitions between edited scenes, a jog/shuttle dial for easy location of edit points, audio dub for replacing the linear-track sound on a tape without affecting the video, and video dub for replacing the picture without affecting the linear-track audio.

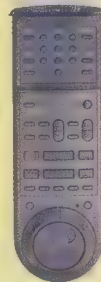
For home theater, it offers hi-fi stereo audio, two search speeds, visible fast forward and rewind (if you hold down the button), time search, 30-second skip, blank tape search, high-speed rewind and striking good looks. There's even a child lock that prevents others from using the VCR (unless they get their hands on the manual).

Its timeshifting facilities are unusual and effective. It doesn't have VCR Plus, but it does have a one-key programmer on the front panel. Using this button and the front display, you can set the timer without having to search for the remote, and without turning the TV on. (Due to the popularity of onscreen programming, most recent VCRs can only be programmed from the remote with the TV on.) Just push the button to adjust a parameter, then wait four seconds for the next parameter to appear on the

HIGHLIGHTS

S-VHS editing VCRs get scarcer every day—only Mitsubishi and

Panasonic have introduced new models in the last year. Once you try the Mitsubishi HS-U67, though, that doesn't seem to matter. It has all the required editing features—a flying erase head (two, in fact), audio dub, video dub and a jog/shuttle dial. And it also makes a handsome deck for high-end home theaters. Picture and audio quality are very good to excellent and ease of use is very good, for a very good to excellent overall rating. There's no better \$999 editing deck made.

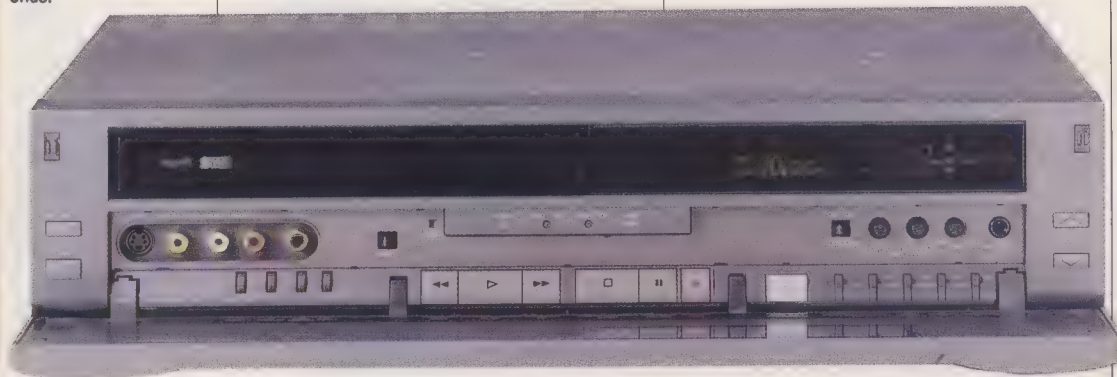


display. You can also set the timer from the remote through onscreen menus, or through the quick program button, which saves a few steps in the menu.

The tuner is equally versatile. In addition to direct-access tuning and programmable scan, the U67 offers Q.V. (quick view) scan, with an easily reconfigurable scan set for hopping between channels you've selected previously.

The U67 will please design-conscious consumers, thanks to the slick-looking gray door covering the front panel. The door has only four tiny LED indicators on the front (for power, video dub, audio dub and S-VHS), plus a window that lets the front-panel display show through.

Drop the door and you find the cassette hatch, playback and recording controls (including audio and video dub), recording level and balance controls, a headphone jack with its own level control, the one-key program button, up/down channel selectors, one-touch record controls, and an S-video/video/stereo audio input. The only thing missing is a jog/shuttle control on the front panel, which would have made editing easier—with the U67, you have to use



the jog/shuttle on the remote to find a specific frame.

The front also has an RCA jack for edit control—it works with synchro edit-equipped Mitsubishi camcorders and VCRs. The jack allows you to start and stop both the U67 and the other device simultaneously with the touch of a button. This makes editing fast, accurate and easy.

The rear jack panel is a little inconvenient in that it has no S-video input—you have to use the one on the front. It has a video/stereo audio input, two video/stereo audio outputs, one S-video output, a spare edit jack, and the usual RF (antenna/cable) input and output connectors. It also has A/V network in and out jacks, which can be connected to other Mitsubishi components. These relay infrared remote control signals.

The remote control has an exposed jog/shuttle dial which is also used to adjust some menu options. Most important buttons are exposed; others, like the OTR/off timer and 10-digit keypad buttons, are hidden under a flip-up panel.

Operating the U67 is pretty simple, but many options are concealed within a multilayer menu system. It's not too tough to navigate—just guess your way through until you stumble over the option you want. The menus are in plain English with onscreen instructions, which are a big help.

The manual, on the other hand, isn't much help at all. It doesn't have a table of contents or a list of what's inside. The only way to find out how to operate a certain feature is to read the entire 160-page manual and hope you remember everything, or use the index

in the back and hope you can figure out how Mitsubishi classified that particular function.

Don't mistake our frustration with the manual as a complaint about the VCR. It's a real pleasure to use, either in an editing setup or for home theater. The buttons, both on the deck and remote, are large and well-organized. Ease of use is very good.

Picture quality is very good to excellent, near the top of the S-VHS class. The only current models we know of

that might offer a bit more picture quality are Mitsubishi's HS-U82, which lists for \$700 more, and JVC's HR-S6800, which lacks the HS-U67's editing features. Audio quality is also very good to excellent, although frequency response at the EP speed is weak.

At \$999, this VCR is a great value. Its overall very good to excellent performance puts it in the top ranks of consumer VCRs. For those who need a relatively inexpensive editing deck, it's an outstanding choice.

Mitsubishi HS-U67 S-VHS VCR

Price: \$999

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 14 lbs.; 4-3/4 x 16-3/4 x 13-7/8 inches

Tape Speeds: SP, LP (playback only), EP

Video Heads: 4

Rapid Search: by index or time, or for blank tape

Cue & Review Search: 6x/9x SP, 9x/30x EP

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 250x, time depends on presence of recorded signals

Jacks: front—S-video/video/stereo audio input, edit, headphones; rear—video/stereo audio input, 2 video/stereo audio outputs, S-video output, edit, A/V network in/out

Remote Pause: synchro edit

Remote Control: IR wireless with LED indicator for transmit and adjust mode, jog/shuttle dial and exposed buttons for menu, adjust on/off, index - and +, VCR/TV, display, remote control backlight, rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, record, stop, pause/still, TV, VCR, mute, quick view, audio function, video function, quick program, power, volume up and down, channel up and down; under flap—buttons for off timer, OTR, VCR A, VCR B, input, cancel, enter and 10-digit keypad

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: index, blank tape, counter

Audio: linear mono, hi-fi AFM stereo

Titles/Graphics: time and date record

Tuning Method: frequency synthesis

Channel Selectors: programmable up/down scan on VCR, scan plus direct access on remote

Preset Method: auto program, with manual add/erase

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels

Timer: 8-event/1-month

Special Features: still-frame, frame advance, slow motion, speed play, audio dub, video dub, insert edit, jog/shuttle dial (on remote), one-key programming, dual flying erase heads, synchro edit

Absent Features: jog/shuttle dial on deck, VCR Plus, microphone jack

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: S-VHS—400 lines, VHS—240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance—

45.8 SP, 41.6 EP; weighted luminance—48.8 SP, 47.8 EP; unweighted video—42.5 SP, 41.4 EP; weighted video—47.3 SP, 49.5 EP; chroma AM—45.1 SP, 39.4 EP; chroma PM—40.2 SP, 36.7 EP

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.6/-1.1; linear (-3 dB)—50 Hz-10 kHz SP, 50 Hz-2 kHz EP

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 86.1 dB

Linear Audio S/N: 42.3 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-fi—0.3%, linear—0.9%

RATINGS

Picture: very good/excellent

Audio: very good/excellent

Ease of Use: very good

Overall: very good/excellent

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VIDEOTESTS

Wireless Wonder:
The infrared remote control on JVC's GR-M5u camcorder accesses special features like animation, time-lapse and audio dub.



VIDEOTEST
679

JVC VHS-C camcorder

don't have editing VCRs and special ef-

JVC has built a reputation for outstanding subcompact VHS-C and S-VHS-C camcorders. Most dispense with in-camera editing features and concentrate on picture quality. In our book, that's a good way to go (although those who

fects equipment might disagree). When we first saw the GR-M5u, the first conventional VHS-C camcorder the company has introduced in some time, we were curious to see if it would live up to the standards set by JVC's subcompacts.

The feature package reflects many intelligent choices. While many manufacturers have been stripping the features off their inexpensive camcorders, JVC has included all the essentials, with a few unique extras. Of course, some people don't want to be bothered with anything but the zoom and run/stop

JVC GR-M5u VHS-C Camcorder

Price: \$1,100

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
2.5 lbs. without battery or cassette; 5-1/4 x 3-7/8 x 13 inches

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD, 270,000 pixels

Lens: f/1.4, 8x (6.7-54mm) zoom

Filter Diameter: 52mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 1/2 inch at wide-angle

Autofocus: TTL with auto macro and power manual focus ring

Iris: auto with twilight mode and auto BLC

Auto Fade: trigger-

operated, to black

Shutter Speeds (sec.):
1/60 (normal), 1/100, 1/250, 1/500, 1/1,000, 1/4,000

White Balance: auto plus 9-step manual

Viewfinder: 0.6-inch CRT, with diopter and onscreen indicators for shutter speed, manual focus, low contrast during AF, record speed, operating mode, twilight mode, index marking, counter/memory, remaining time, fader, dew, low battery, interval record time and interval time, auto date titler, white balance, clock battery, AF target frame, insert edit/audio dub, date, time, birthday

VCR Controls: pause,

play, stop, rewind/search, fast forward/search

Microphone: mono electret condenser

Jacks: external mic, earphone, remote pause and A/V out

Tape Speeds: SP, EP

Video Heads: 4 (small head drum)

Cue & Review Search:
3x SP; 7x forward, 5x reverse EP

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 2 min. 12 sec. for TC-20

Remote Pause: on camcorder and on A/V out cable

Remote Control: IR wireless with buttons on side 1 for start/stop,

wide-angle and tele; on side 2 for rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop, play, insert, pause, VISS, audio dub, record time/animation, interval time/self timer

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue:
index mark but not read

Audio: linear mono

Titles/Graphics: date/age imprint

Special Features: still-frame, audio dub, insert edit, animation, self-timer, time-lapse, flying erase head, cinema and twilight modes, auto head cleaner, powered video light, synchro edit

Absent Features: hi-fi

HIGHLIGHTS

The whole idea of point-and-shoot camcorders is to make them as simple

as possible, but recently, some manufacturers have gone so far as to strip off essential features. Fortunately, JVC's latest point-and-shoot, the \$1,100 GR-M5u, still packs all the features most shooters require. Picture quality is average, audio is fair, and ease of use is very good, for an overall average rating. If you like large camcorders, investigate the GR-M5u, but JVC offers several subcompacts which perform better.



audio, manual iris, digital superimposer, image stabilizer, line recording

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution:
240 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted video—37.1 SP, 35.5 EP; weighted video—43.9 SP, 41.9 EP; chroma AM—40.2 SP, 35.2 EP; chroma PM—36.3 SP, 33.5 EP

Minimum Illumination:
2.7 lux for 50 IRE

Audio Frequency Response (-3 dB):
100 Hz-4 kHz SP, 100 Hz-2 kHz EP

Linear Audio S/N:
40.1

Audio Distortion: 1.1%

RATINGS

Picture: average

Audio: fair

Ease of Use:
very good

Overall: average



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controls, and that's okay. But a little extra effort usually goes a long way toward getting good pictures.

Most remarkable is the manual white balance control. Although it's relegated to a minuscule, hard-to-find button on the left side, it offers a wider range of adjustment than any such control we've recently seen. It offers four outdoor color temperatures (6,500, 5,700, 4,400 and 3,100 Kelvins), plus five settings for different grades of fluorescent lights. The manual guides you in applying these settings, but to make best use of them, you really need a color monitor. With careful use, this control should let you achieve nearly perfect color.

It also offers an external microphone jack, an earphone jack and variable shutter speeds to 1/4,000-second — all features rapidly disappearing from point-and-shoots. Its powered accessory shoe accepts a small color enhancement light, effective on a single subject to a range of about 10 feet. This arrangement is convenient, but cuts camcorder battery life depending on how much you use the light. There's also a conventional accessory shoe for mounting an external microphone or other accessories.

The GR-M5u has two special modes, each accessed at the touch of a left-side button. The cinema mode puts black bars at the top and bottom of the picture for a letterbox effect. The twilight mode, effective for shooting nighttime scenes like fireworks and city lights, sets the white balance to 5,700 Kelvins, sets the focus to infinity, and activates auto shutter-speed selection.

The full-range autofocus system automatically goes into the macro focus range for close-ups, as long as the zoom is set for wide-angle. The autofocus works okay — low-contrast and low-light situations fool it, as they do most TTL systems, but on contrasty subjects it's reasonably stable, though less so than the best TTL systems.

The powered focus ring is unusual. It has a very short throw — it's really a double-throw switch. Push it one way, and the focus moves out, and vice versa. This feels more natural and is much easier to find by feel than plus/minus focus buttons. But it's not as accurate or comfortable as the continuous-motion ring found on JVC's S-VHS-C GR-S505.

The GR-M5u includes an unusual remote control with controls on one side for camera functions (zoom and run/stop) and VCR (playback) controls on the other. Some of the VCR controls double for camera functions like edit search.

Several features are available only
continued on page 23

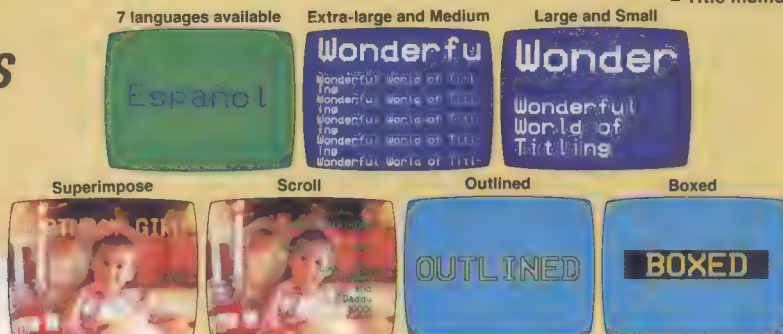


JX-T88
CHARACTER
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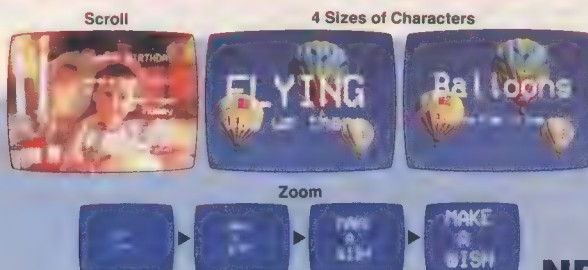
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- Return monitor function
- Title memory backup function



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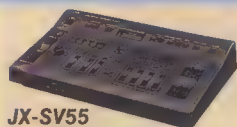
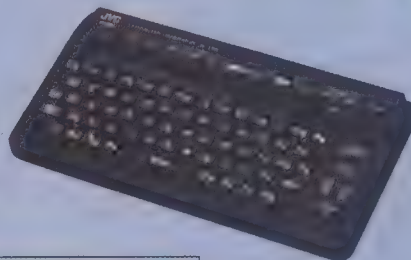
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- Two-way power supply (AC adapter or 6 AA batteries)
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- Built-in Standard Signal Generator (SSG)
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- Title memory backup function

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AV Selector

- 7 sets of audio/video in and out lines; all including S-Video terminals
- Remote control provided
- Dual operation with key lock function
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- Auxiliary audio inputs
- Two sets of monitor outputs with S-Video terminals; one with a Y/C separator circuit



JX-S300
AV Selector

- 4 AV inputs, 3 AV outputs, plus a monitor output with 2 sets of audio jacks
- Compatible with Super VHS VCRs
- Front panel AV inputs including an S-Video terminal
- Dubbing/editing possible between up to 3 VCRs
- Remote control for input/mode selection and power ON/OFF
- Built-in Y/C separator
- Initial setting switch for timer operation



JX-S100
AV Selector

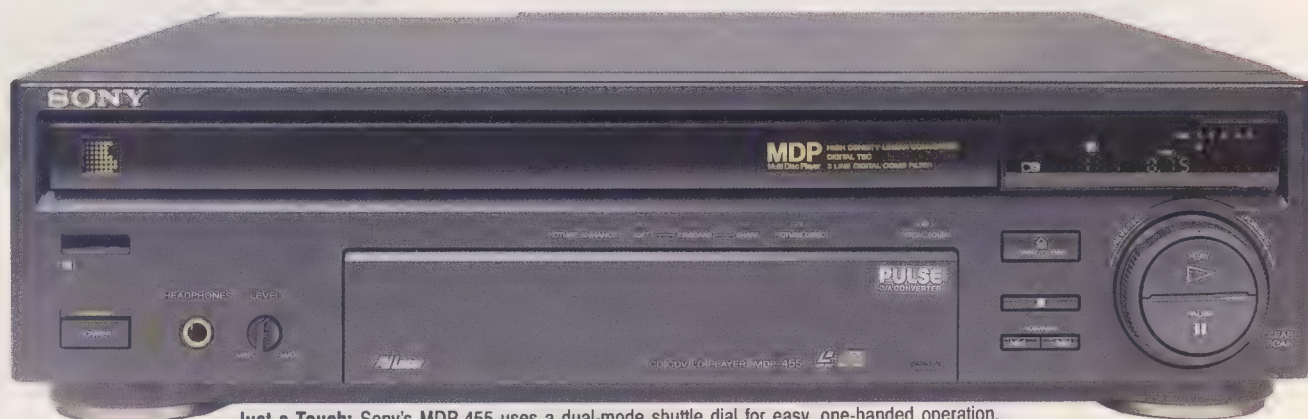
- Compatible with input and output from Super VHS VCRs
- 4 AV inputs, 3 AV outputs, plus 2 monitor terminals
- Front panel AV inputs including an S-Video terminal
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VIDEOTESTS



Just a Touch: Sony's MDP-455 uses a dual-mode shuttle dial for easy, one-handed operation.



SONY combi player

First is a digital timebase corrector (TBC), which eliminates picture degradation caused by the slight but inevitable mechanical imprecisions of the laserdisc transport. Laserdisc players produce negligible

Sony's MDP-455 combi player replaces the MDP-333, one of our all-time favorite budget-priced combi players. The big difference between the two is that the new model adds several picture-enhancing circuits.

timebase error compared to VCRs, but a well-designed TBC can still slightly improve picture quality.

It has a digital comb filter that feeds the MDP-455's S-video output, so it's only effective if your TV has an S-video input. The filter minimizes hanging dots and dot crawl, the crawling, fuzzy edges you sometimes see on horizontal and vertical lines in the picture. If you have a top-notch TV, its internal comb filter (which you can employ by connecting the MDP-455 with a standard video cable) might be better. However, the MDP-455's comb filter should outperform those of most midpriced TV sets.

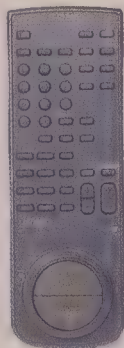
The MDP-455's noise reduction is particularly effective on older, noisier discs mastered from one-inch videotape

HIGHLIGHTS

Sony's MDP-455 costs only \$599, but it delivers several high-end features that enhance video quality.

It achieves a very good picture through use of a digital timebase corrector, a three-line comb filter, switchable video enhancement and a video direct mode for a sharper (but noisier) picture. Its digital-to-analog converter provides very pleasing sound—used as a CD player, it outperforms all combi players we've recently tested. This exceptional audio will also enhance the home theater experience. Ease of use is very good to excellent, for an overall very good rating. It's a good choice for those seeking a low-priced combi player.

Sony MDP-455 Combi Player



Price: \$599

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 17.75 lbs.; 4-1/2 x 17 x 16-1/4 inches

Disc Formats: 3-inch and 5-inch CD, 5-inch CD-V, 8-inch LD and LD single, and 12-inch LD

Cue & Review (Search): 10x or 30x

Maximum Fast Forward/Reverse Time: direct access—12 secs., scan—90 secs.

Remote Pause: Control S input

Remote Control: IR wireless with shuttle ring surrounding play and pause, and sepa-

rate buttons for open/close, disc/TV, power, display, clear, frame/time, program, 1/all, shuffle play, repeat A-B, A/V time, 10-digit keypad, +10, search/next, back, analog/digital audio, audio monitor St/L/R, CX, auto pause, intro search, memory play, stop, multispeed forward and reverse, speed set - and +, still/step reverse and forward, ACS/AMS chapter/track forward and reverse; plus volume up and down, channel up and down, TV/video and power for Sony TVs with "R" mark

Counter Memory: A-B repeat plus 6 custom indexes

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: chapter/track marks, programmed play of up to 20 chapter/tracks

Digital Audio: stereo/dual mono

AFM Audio: stereo/dual mono

Outputs: 2 S-video/video/stereo audio, video/DC/mono audio for RF adapter, Toslink optical digital audio

Special Features: clear scan, digital TBC, noise reduction, picture enhancement, intro search, auto program, custom index

Absent Features: auto side-changing, digital

effects, jog dial

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 425 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance—46.6, weighted luminance—51.6, unweighted video—46.2, weighted video—51.7, chroma AM—43.2, chroma PM—42.3

Audio Frequency Response: digital—10 Hz-20 kHz, +0.6/-2.6 dB; FM analog—40 Hz-20 kHz, +2.6/-1.3 dB, down 4.5 dB at 20 Hz

Audio S/N: digital—more than 103 dB (our measurement limit), analog—73.1 dB

Dynamic Range: 99 dB (digital)

Audio Distortion: digital rated—0.002%, measured—less than 0.02% (our measurement limit); analog measured—0.09%

RATINGS

Picture: very good

Audio: digital—very good/excellent, analog—very good

Ease of Use: very good/excellent

Overall: very good

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VIDEOTESTS



Just a Touch: Sony's MDP-455 uses a dual-mode shuttle dial for easy, one-handed operation.

VIDEOTEST
680

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The MDP-455's noise reduction is particularly effective on older, noisier

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**Sony MDP-455
Combi Player**



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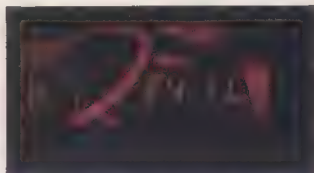


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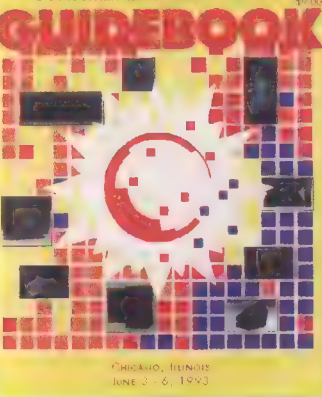
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CIRCLE SHOWCASE #4

instead of from the newer D-1 and D-2 digital video formats. It has three picture enhancement modes—soft, standard and sharp—plus a picture direct button that bypasses the circuit.

A standout on both the player and the remote is Sony's dual-mode shuttle control, which looks like the jog/shuttle controls found on more expensive models, but delivers two scan speeds, 10x and 30x. The central portion of the control contains play and pause buttons—a convenient arrangement for operating by feel. Many older laserdisc players produced considerable picture distortion when scanning CLV discs, but in this player Sony delivers alternating still-frames and black frames.

Convenience features include intro scan (which plays the first eight seconds of each chapter or track), programmable playback sequencing of chapters or tracks, and shuffle (random) play. An auto pause feature stops play after each chapter or track, which is useful for karaoke. It also offers auto program, which chooses playback of chapters or tracks so they fit within a designated time—ideal for those who like to dub CDs onto audio cassettes. An A/V calendar shows the number of tracks on a disc (up to

20) and the total playing time. The player accepts up to six custom index marks for playback from any point you select.

Of course, the MDP-455 plays all sizes of laserdiscs and CDs, and delivers play speeds from 1/90x to 3x on CAV discs. It doesn't offer digital effects, or automatic side-changing.

It has two S-video/video/stereo audio outputs, Control S in and out jacks for relaying remote control signals from other Sony components, and a Toslink optical audio output for feeding an external D/A converter.

The manual has good diagrams and excellent explanations but cross references are not as good as in other Sony manuals. The legends on the remote contrast the remote's gray color better than those on the MDP-333 for readability in near darkness, but backlighting would have helped. The basic controls on the remote are easy to locate by touch. The one fly in the ointment was a somewhat sticky disc drawer. But we tested an early production sample—Sony should have these kinks ironed out by the time you read this. Ease of use is very good to excellent.

Even though the video on the MDP-455 does not measure as high as

the MDP-333, except on chroma PM signal-to-noise ratio, picture quality is still very good. (A few years ago, we would have considered it excellent.) Our tests found audio quality for digital material very good to excellent.

To investigate its audio performance further we tried a single-blind audio shootout between the MDP-455 and Panasonic's excellent \$1,100 LX-900. We were surprised to find the Sony more listenable than the Panasonic, despite the latter's superior lab test results. The Sony offers tighter bass, a more pronounced (if a bit too crisp) high end, and better imaging.

Overall, we rate the MDP-455 very good. It doesn't offer the ultimate in video performance, but it's good for the modest \$599 price, and the sound makes it a very listenable CD player. ■

27-INCH TV

continued from page 12

temperature of 7,000 Kelvins—low by consumer TV standards, but very close to pro standards. Its back panel includes screwdriver controls for RGB bias, G



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and R/B drive, and other functions. Custom installers love this arrangement because it allows them to use a signal generator (or test laserdisc) in conjunction with a color analyzer to calibrate the monitor to pro standards. Of course, only a qualified technician should touch these controls.

The ProScan brand was introduced two years ago by Thomson Consumer Electronics, which wanted a line of upscale products to supplement its offerings under the RCA and GE brands. The PS27121 offers a nice slate of features, including picture-in-picture with swap and freeze. There's no second tuner—you'll have to connect a VCR or another video source to use the PIP.

There's a full-function remote control, and a simplified remote which controls only power, channel, volume and the menu system. The full-function remote controls an unusually large number of extra devices—two VCRs of almost any brand, a cable box and an audio component.

The audio system includes an expanded stereo mode, which alters the stereo sound for a broader soundstage. The set has jacks for external speakers. You can use these jacks to power two front speakers instead of using the set's speakers. Or you can use the set's speakers, and use the speaker jacks to power rear speakers.

The rear jack panel has inputs for two video sources, an S-video source, two audio sources and two RF sources. There's an RF output to a cable box, which lets you record a premium channel while watching another. This normally requires a splitter and an A/B switch. There is a video output which carries the signal shown on the screen, plus fixed and variable audio outputs.

Operating the set is also fairly easy. One of the most convenient features is commercial skip, which lets you graze the channels for any period of time you select (each push of the button increases this time by 30 seconds), then reverts to the channel you were watching. Ease of use is good to very good.

Picture quality is very good compared to other high-performance sets and excellent compared to typical TVs—rather remarkable for this price range. Accuracy of colors is very good to excellent, but there is a tendency for strong white areas to discolor if they are stationary for a long time.

Audio quality is good. The internal speakers are inaudible below 75 Hertz and above 15 kilohertz, but we did not attempt to quantify speaker output. Dialog leaks into the surround speaker output—we felt it did not add to the feeling of being surrounded by action, with the

dialog in front. However, the expanded stereo effectively widens the soundstage.

Overall, we rate the PS27121 very good. It's quite a good value—videophiles can get the NTSC standard, reference-quality picture they demand for the price of a typical 27-inch set. ■

VHS-C CAMCORDER

continued from page 16

from the remote. Audio dub lets you replace the existing audio on a tape with new sound from the camcorder mic or an external mic. Index mark lets you mark spots on the tape so you can find them automatically if your VCR has index search. Animation lets you create Ray Harryhausen-style stop-frame animation—each push of the record button captures 1/4, 1/2 or one second of video. The self-timer starts the camcorder in 15 seconds, 30 seconds, one minute or five minutes. Time-lapse combines these two functions—it automatically records an animation segment at the intervals available on the timer.

Although the camcorder doesn't have a titler, it does have a unique date/time/age imprinter. The date and time stamp work like those on other camcorders, except that the date can be superimposed in large, outlined letters that stretch across the screen. The age imprinter can be set so the camcorder marks each scene with the subject's age.

Only completely inexperienced shooters will have any trouble using the GR-M5u. Most of the camera buttons are large and easy to find. We find its large frame makes it more comfortable than most subcompacts, although it's more difficult to pack. If you have a JVC VCR with synchro edit, you can even set it up with the GR-M5u for one-touch editing. Ease of use is very good.

We measured the GR-M5u using test tapes, because it doesn't record from line sources. In such cases, results are always a little lower than with electronic signals recorded on the same machine. Picture quality is average—not bad, but not up to the performance standards set by other JVC machines. Minimum illumination is rated at one lux, and although you can get a viewable picture at that level, it requires 2.7 lux to obtain a contrast ratio of 50 IRE units. Audio quality is fair for VHS linear track.

Overall, we rate the GR-M5u average. Unlike its point-and-shoot brethren, it shouldn't leave you wishing for features that aren't there. But if picture quality is your goal, we suspect you'll be better off investigating one of JVC's VHS-C subcompacts. ■

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HOME THEATER

BY RON GOLDBERG

How to tweak your rear-projection TV for a perfect picture

It's no surprise to *Video Magazine* readers that rear-screen projection is getting better all the time. And it's certainly no surprise that some of the better units deliver a cinematic illusion. With a surround-sound system, careful room lighting and some minor suspension of disbelief, a good rear-screen monitor can almost fool you into thinking you're watching a movie instead of TV.

What is surprising is that most rear-screen TV owners (not to mention dealers) rarely adjust their sets for optimum performance. Much more so than direct-view sets, a rear-screen projector needs occasional adjustment. That's because it has three large, very hot tubes burning inside a closed cabinet. Heat is the enemy of all things electronic, and in the case of these monitors, picture settings can drift over time.

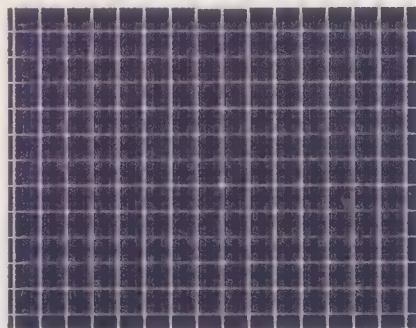
The most important adjustment to keep on top of is convergence. Convergence is the process of aiming the three tubes—red, green and blue—as closely together as possible. When combined, these three primary colors make up the full video spectrum. Converging (or overlapping) them accurately is crucial for a sharp, focused picture. Unfortunately, of all the picture settings, convergence has the greatest tendency to drift. That's because both temperature changes and room vibrations can shift the tube housings ever so slightly off kilter. Moving the set can also mess up the convergence, even if the monitor is on wheels.

If you've recently bought a rear-screen monitor and it was not set up by a professional, odds are the convergence is way off. Ditto if you frequently move the set back and forth to get at the rear-panel jacks. Adjusting the convergence is a quick and simple procedure, and when you're done, the picture quality will be noticeably improved. If you've had your set for a while and haven't converged it since the initial setup, it's time to do it again. In fact, you should consider convergence setting part of your regular audio/video routine, like cleaning the heads on your VCR.

All rear-screen projectors feature some kind of onscreen test pattern—usually a crosshair—for converging the

picture. After letting your set warm up for at least half an hour, call up the test pattern and you'll see a menu that lets you shift the red and blue information vertically or horizontally. (The green tube is fixed.)

I prefer to use the crosshatch test pattern on Reference Recordings' *A Video Standard* laserdisc, because it shows a full-screen grid instead of the more forgiving center crosshair. If you have a laserdisc player, I strongly recommend you



Two for Testing: Set convergence with a crosshatch pattern (top) or an outer-space image (above).

pick up a copy of this disc, which has all sorts of useful setup screens, including color, brightness and contrast guides.

The idea is to get the three tubes in the monitor as perfectly converged on the test pattern as possible. If convergence is perfect, the three colors add up to white, with no colored edges. That's the goal, anyway. In real life, achieving perfect convergence across the entire screen is difficult, if not impossible. You may notice that what's perfect in the center makes for lousy convergence in the corners, and vice versa.

If you can't see this with your set's

internal test pattern and don't have a laserdisc player, there's probably a tape in your collection that will help. Try a movie that has an outer space scene with lots of stars—any of the *Star Wars* movies will do. Call up a freeze frame of one of these scenes. If you see that the white stars near the corners of the screen are edged with red or blue, your convergence is off. When faced with a choice between good center or corner convergence, you'll be forced to compromise. You're best off converging for the center of the screen—most of the important picture information will usually be close by.

Unfortunately, these user adjustments are only for static convergence—the aim of the tubes. They're just the tip of the iceberg in properly setting up a projection monitor. Dynamic convergence settings—skew, keystone and other parameters used to tilt and bend the picture, and adjust the convergence all over the screen—are equally important to a well-adjusted picture.

In addition, projectors feature internal controls for gain and focus of the red, green and blue tubes. All these parameters must be carefully tweaked for a rear-screen projector to live up to its potential. These controls are hidden inside, and there are two good reasons why. For one, slight miscalculations, especially on dynamic convergence, will really mess up the picture. Beyond this, the controls are near the exposed electrical chassis, meaning that only a qualified technician should go near them.

The RGB gain controls adjust the intensity of each of the three picture tubes. If you've noticed that it's impossible to get a neutral black on your set—that is, a black without tinges of green or blue—the RGB gain is probably off. Other symptoms of improper RGB gain are purplish blues and the inability to produce natural flesh tones. If any of this is true for your set, don't blame it—it merely needs adjustment.

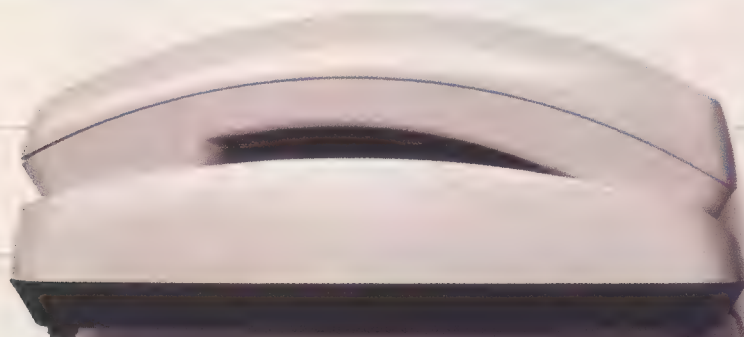
RGB focus is also important. Unless the three tubes are in perfect focus, it will be impossible to get absolute convergence. If you find yourself having to use your set's sharpness control too

continued on page 60

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Circle No. 9 on Reader Service Card

BY RICH WARREN

CURING THE VIDEO JITTERS

How a wave of electronic shock absorbers is helping camcorders say no to shake.

You've invited the neighbors to watch your latest videos. Hospitably, you place chips, soft drinks and Dramamine around the room. Audience members oooh and aaah, awed to discover you captured a California earthquake as it happened. Abashed, you sheepishly admit the earth didn't shake—only the camcorder.

Don't feel bad. The jumpiness isn't all your fault. For years, camcorder technology raced ahead of the refinements needed to help bring it under the control of non-professional videomakers. VHS camcorders were originally designed to be held with two hands, braced on or against a firm shoulder. Their size and weight helped ensure stability, given a correct shooting stance. But miniature camcorders changed the equation. Small, light 8mm and VHS-C camcorders proved difficult to steady even with a proper two-handed grip.

Even worse, many simply disregarded instructions about bracing and assumed palm-size camcorders could be wielded effectively with one hand, initiating an era of shaky shooting. At the same time, stronger zoom lenses magnified ever slighter motions. A 12x zoom on a compact camcorder is nearly useless without some means of support, like a tripod—or stabilization.

Which brings us to the good news. Camcorder refinements have caught up to camcorder basics. Electronic image stabilization is the term given to a vari-

ety of systems that eliminate much of the jitter from handheld shooting. Like shock absorbers on a rocky road, stabilizers smooth out the rough spots while, ideally, exacting little or no price in overall performance. Even though stabilization won't remove all unwanted motion—especially if severe—it can significantly improve the look of your home videos.

In only a few years, stabilization systems have moved from drawing boards to store shelves. In all, about a dozen brands of camcorder, covering more than two dozen models, have stabilizers,

although all are derived from the systems created by six key manufacturers—Panasonic, Mitsubishi, JVC, Hitachi, Sony and Canon. Stabilizer-bearing camcorders from Ricoh and Yashica, for example, use the Sony/Canon system, while some Quasar and Magnavox camcorders share Panasonic's system. A seventh key player, Sharp, has created yet another system for its Hi8 ViewCam, which is just being introduced.

With man-



The Light Stuff: Sony's CCD-TR101 uses a stabilizer that bends light before it reaches the lens.

ufacturers creating their own stabilizers rather than licensing a single system, it's not surprising they differ from camcorder to camcorder. In fact, while each manufacturer says its stabilizer is the best, each approach exhibits strengths and weaknesses (see "Shock of the New" for a Hands-On evaluation). But the goals are the same—better videos and easier to use, more appealing camcorders.

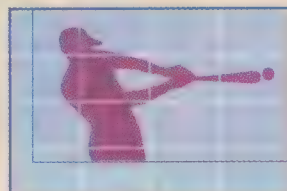
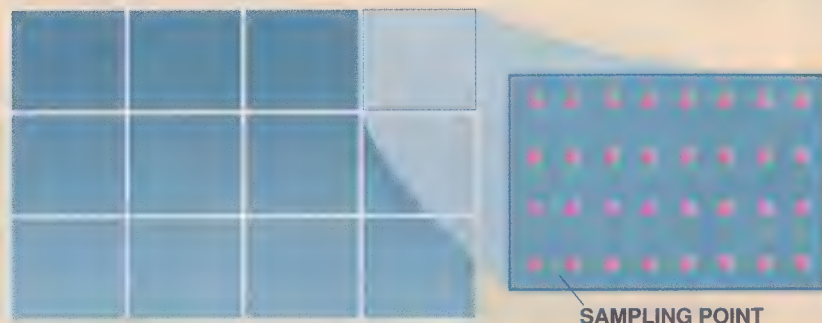
Panasonic, the first company to exploit the technology, began experimenting with methods of eliminating camcorder shake about five years ago. A VHS model, the PV-460, it introduced in 1988 was the first consumer camcorder with image stabilization. But the mechanical system was too bulky for miniature camcorders, and too difficult and costly to adapt.

Returning to the drawing board, Panasonic engineers soon emerged with Digital Electronic Image Stabilization (DEIS), a system based on a computer chip that made it possible to eliminate costly and cumbersome moving parts.

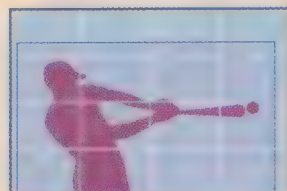
DEIS detects camcorder motion directly from the CCD sensor using a type of computer reasoning called fuzzy logic. For each frame of video, the camcorder stores in memory 60 percent of the CCD's image after filtering out noise and high-frequency signal components. Using this memory as a reference, the system divides the image into quadrants each containing 30 points that are sensitive to movement.

If the camcorder's subject moves relative to the points, the system assumes the subject is moving. If the points and the subject both move, the system de-

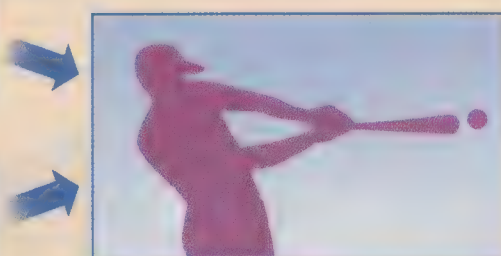
SHAKE-DETECTION ZONES



FRAME A



FRAME B



Shock Treatment:

The stabilizer in JVC's GR-SZ1 (right) divides the imaging area into 12 shake-detection zones of 32 points each. A sensor detects camcorder shake, tracks the image relative to the shake, then enlarges the image 1.14 times to cut motion and fill the frame.



processor.

Centering on the part of the picture showing the least motion, the system determines the precise area and degree of compensation needed, then sends the data to the recorder. If

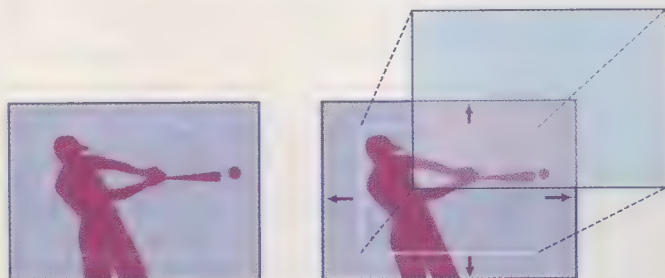
it's uncertain about the motion being sensed, the DEIS circuit

will momentarily cancel.

The drawback of Panasonic's system is that it decreases resolution because of the need to enlarge the image, then center the enlarged portion to fill the

cides the camcorder—not the subject—is moving and compensates.

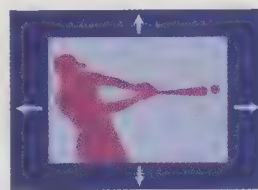
DEIS cancels both vertical and horizontal camcorder motion by enlarging the input signal with an electronic zoom



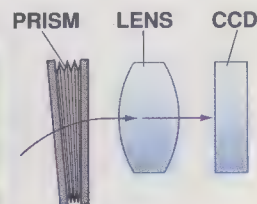
HITACHI

PANASONIC

Stabilizers take different paths to reach the same goal. Hitachi discards the least stable pixels in an image, but employs a high-resolution CCD to maintain Hi8 image quality. Panasonic senses the camcorder's motion relative to the subject, then digitally enlarges the picture's most stable portion to fill the frame.



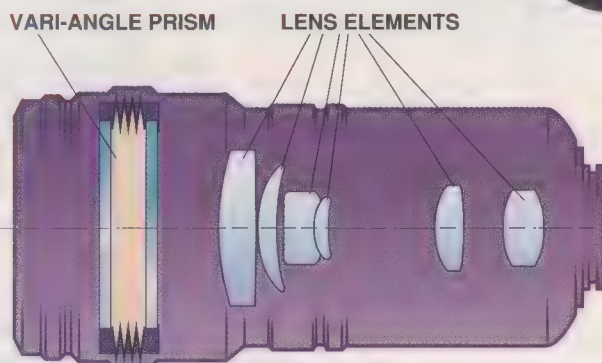
MITSUBISHI



SONY/CANON

Mitsubishi uses a piezoelectric gyroscope to detect shake, then shifts the picture within the frame to compensate, leaving a thin black border around the scene. Sony and Canon use shake sensors and a liquid-filled prism to realign the light path before it reaches the lens.

JITTERS



A Moveable Feast: Cutaway of Canon's 10x lens for the L1 camcorder shows how the flexible Vari-Angle prism (above) is able to bend light before it reaches the lens elements and the camcorder's CCD.

screen. However, the loss is slight.

Panasonic sells a couple of full-size DEIS models as well as two Palmcorders, the VHS-C PV-42 and the S-VHS-C PV-S62, and will soon introduce two replacement models, the VHS-C PV-43 and the S-VHS-C PV-S63. As a bonus, the same digital circuits let DEIS camcorders offer digital zoom and mirror-image effects. Moreover, Panasonic engineers are exploring using DEIS in VCRs to remove playback

image fluctuations.

Panasonic wasn't alone in recognizing stabilization's potential. Mitsubishi's approach, called StableCam, is in its VHS-C HS-CX4 and S-VHS-C HS-CSX7 camcorders, two models that can still be found on store shelves although replacement models with StableCam will soon be announced.

The system employs a twin piezo-electric gyroscope to sense image shake. The gyroscope, rigidly attached to the

lens barrel, detects vertical and horizontal motion and their angles to determine whether the camcorder is shaking up and down or from side to side.

Sensors pick up and amplify voltage changes from each motion and send the information to an eight-bit analog-to-digital converter, which processes and sends the information to a microprocessor designed by Mitsubishi. The chip factors in such elements as the zoom lens' focal length and passes the data to a circuit governing the CCD's vertical and horizontal driving pulses, which are adjusted to compensate for unwanted movement. The CCD captures a slightly off-center, but more stable image.

The main drawback is that the range of compensation is relatively small. The instruction manual for the camcorder notes, for example, that StableCam will not compensate for shooting while walking. In addition, a thin black border is needed to mask the CCD shifts. However, the microprocessor is so powerful that Mitsubishi also uses it to run the camcorder's autofocus and auto white balance functions.

At Canon, the optics division collaborated with Sony on a dramatically different approach, the results of which can be found in Sony's Hi8 CCD-TR101 and in the 10x lens for Canon's Hi8 L1 camcorder. While Canon hasn't said it would include the system in a camcorder body, it does intend to add it to a future 35mm SLR camera.

SteadyShot, as the stabilizer is called, is an optical system that uses a special lens-like prism to compensate for camcorder shake before light ever reaches the CCD. On the TR101, horizontal and vertical sensors on the lens barrel sense angular displacement and acceleration. The data is sent to a microprocessor controlling two electric coil motors that expand or compress a flex-



Digital Bonus: The PV-S62's stabilizer chip is also used for features like a digital telephoto mode.

ible bellows on the prism to change its vertical angle. This has the effect of re-aiming the light coming through the lens to compensate for movement by shifting the image on the CCD.

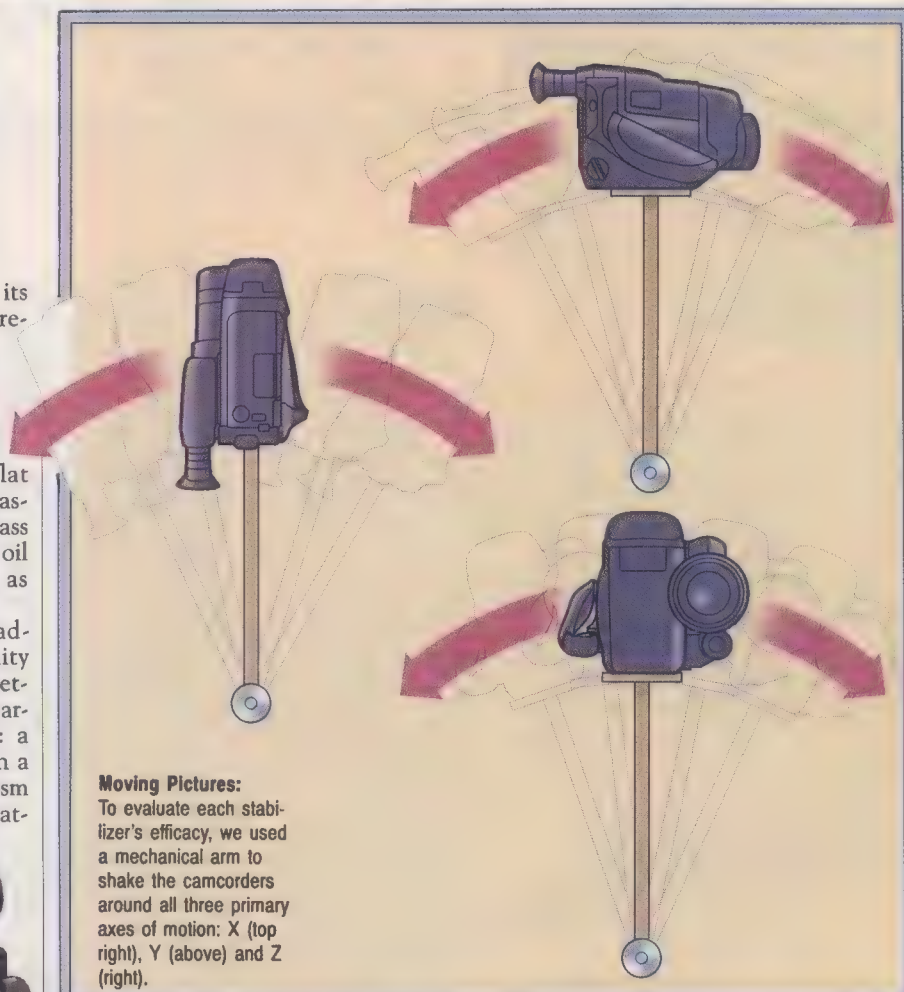
The Vari-Angle prism, which is the system's key, consists of two flat slices of glass separated by a layered plastic bellows. The space between the glass elements is filled with a clear silicon oil that has the same refractive index as glass.

Unlike the other systems, SteadyShot has no effect on picture quality and actually works best at telephoto settings, where shake is always more apparent. Its drawbacks are twofold: a fractionally slower response time than a purely electronic system, since the prism reacts mechanically, and a slightly greater drain on battery power.



Shot Shifter: Mitsubishi's compact CX4 steadies images by shifting them within a thin black frame.

JVC, Sharp and Hitachi also have cures for the shakes. JVC's Digital Image Stabilizer, embodied in its feature-stuffed S-VHS-C GR-SZ1, uses an approach similar to Panasonic. Its 410,000-pixel CCD divides the camcorder's image area into 12 "shake-detection zones," each containing 32 motion sampling points. The 384 points are used by a pair of sensors to track the image in relation to any jitter the camcorder experiences. The image is then slightly enlarged to reduce the apparent motion. Sharp's ViewCam also uses digital circuits to detect camcorder motion, then compensate by adjusting the image. ►



Moving Pictures:

To evaluate each stabilizer's efficacy, we used a mechanical arm to shake the camcorders around all three primary axes of motion: X (top right), Y (above) and Z (right).

SHOCK OF THE NEW—A 5-SYSTEM SHOOTOUT

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

Two years ago, if you wanted image stabilization, you had one choice—the digital system by Panasonic. Now every major camcorder maker offers the feature. But which works the best? We decided to create new tests specifically for stabilizers to find the answer.

We tested three camcorders with digital image stabilizers—Panasonic's S-VHS-C PV-S62, JVC's S-VHS-C GR-SZ1 and Hitachi's Hi8 VM-H39A. We also tried two Hi8s with optical stabilizers—Sony's CCD-TR101 and Canon's L1, with a 10x lens that houses its own stabilizer.

Larry White, technical editor of *Popular Photography*, suggested I conduct lab tests by strapping a laser pointer to the top of each camcorder and using it to track the action of the stabilizer. Because the laser is attached to the camcorder, its light stays in the same place in a recorded picture no matter how you move the camcorder. The picture moves, but the laser doesn't.

But when the stabilizer is activated, it shifts the image to keep it in the frame. Because the laser dot is part of the image, it moves even though the image in the viewfinder doesn't. When the laser moved, I could tell the stabilizer was working. By observing how far it moved, I could tell how much

correction it was applying.

I started by applying a steady, repetitive movement to each camcorder with a motorized arm I designed for these tests. The camcorders rotated on three axes (see diagram), moving about half an inch each way. I also tested them with the machine set to vibrate at varying

continued on next page

**HANDS
ON
TEST**

JITTERS



Extra Pixels: The VM-H39A's stabilizer uses a CCD with 60,000 more pixels than other Hi8 models.

Hitachi's Electronic Image Stabilization System, found in its Hi8 VM-H39A, relies on the extra resolving power of a 470,000-pixel image sensor. With more pixels than most Hi8 CCDs, Hitachi's digital circuits can ignore some without impairing Hi8 image quality, somewhat in the manner of Olympic judges who throw out a competitor's highest and lowest scores.

Don't expect camcorder systems to deliver the same becalmed state as stabilizers on the Queen Elizabeth II in the middle of the rolling Atlantic. Ideally, camcorder stabilizers compensate for small hand-induced jitters. They can help when shooting from a car on hard, paved roads, or from a canoe on a gentle waterway. But you'll find their value decreases as bumpiness increases.

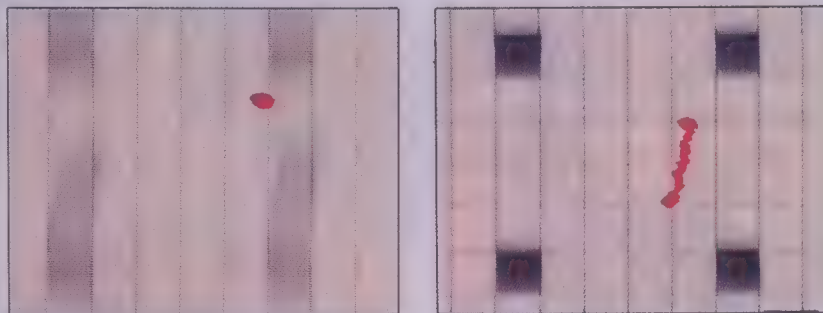
Whatever system you use, remember that your body is still your camcorder's best stabilizer. Unless you're one of those rare shooters with strong, steady arms, one-handed shooting will add some shake. To minimize it, with or without electronic assistance, support the camcorder with two hands, using your left palm, or left thumb in some cases, as a base. Position your legs in a comfortable, supportive stance, usually about a foot apart with one foot slightly ahead of the other.

By following these few simple rules, you'll not only minimize the amount of shake in your home videos, but maximize the value of your camcorder's stabilizer.

Zoom With a View: Sharp's unconventional View-Cam includes a digital stabilizer developed specifically for it.



SHOOTOUT



Trial by Laser: Without stabilization (left), the image moves, creating blur, but light from a laser attached to the camcorder doesn't. With stabilization (right), the laser moves, but the image doesn't.

levels, then viewed the tapes to see which systems performed most smoothly.

I also pointed each camcorder at a resolution chart to check for image degradation. Finally, I set each camcorder on a tripod with the stabilizer on and swung my arm in front of it, suspecting some might mistakenly interpret this as camera shake and try to correct for it.

Since no machine can truly mimic the chaotic movement of the human hand, assistant editor Brian Clark conducted a series of hands-on tests. With each camcorder's stabilizer on, he framed a steady shot of a test chart, then tried pans, tilts and walking shots.

First up was the Panasonic, which has a threshold above which it won't attempt corrections. This threshold—about 33 percent image movement at 1.5 shakes per second on the X axis (horizontal, perpendicular to line of sight)—seems to vary with the situation. This is good—the system gives up when motion is too extreme, so it shuts off during pans and tilts. On static shots, you'll encounter the threshold only at very long zoom ranges.

The Panasonic system degraded the picture noticeably, trimming about 40 lines of horizontal resolution from the 400-line picture. It wasn't effective on the Z axis (horizontal, line of sight), but performed well on the vibration test. The swinging arm test fooled it—the PV-S62 occasionally mistook vertical arm movement for camera shake and moved the image to compensate. This could cause problems when you're shooting active subjects.

Clark said the Panasonic stabilizer reminded him of the first fuzzy logic camcorders, which seemed to "think" too much and often overcompensated for changes in shooting situations. He found an annoying tendency toward vertical jump and jitter.

The JVC activates and deactivates unpredictably when it nears its threshold (about 45 percent image movement), as if it were trying to make up its mind. It is quite effective on all axes, although the picture tended to jump every couple of seconds at some vibration levels. With the stabilizer on, the picture loses about 25 lines of resolution. It was occasionally fooled by the swinging arm test. However, it was Clark's favorite digital system.

The Sony system attempted to stabilize the image no matter how drastic the movement. It was effective on all axes and with vibration, but shuddered at the ends of each shake excursion. It didn't degrade the picture at all and, because it senses only camcorder motion, not image motion, it wasn't fooled by the swinging arm test.

It was Clark's favorite by far. He found its operation effective and nearly invisible—the mark of a good stabilizer. The only fault he found was a slight tendency for the image to drift horizontally during pans.

Even at an extreme 36x digital zoom range, the Hitachi still tried to cor-

continued on page 60



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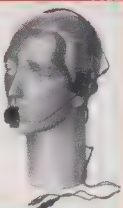
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*Video's innovators spin the wheel at CES
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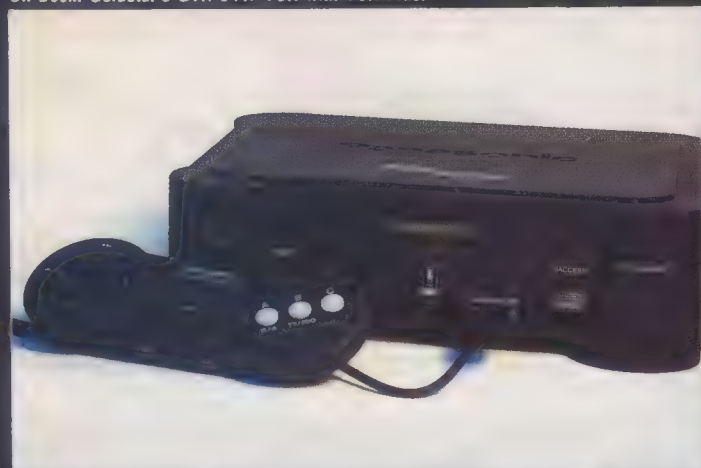
Showtime: inside the main hall at CES.



On Deck: Goldstar's GVR-C447 VCR with VCR Plus.



Freedom of Choice: Pioneer's LaserActive Player with Sega, TurboGrafx and karaoke modules.



New Kid on the Block: Prototype by Panasonic of 3DO's interactive "multiplayer" with a scene from a game disc for the system.



LOGY ETTE



Las Vegas rarely fails to astound. The hotels, seemingly recession-proof, grow more fantastic every visit. The volcano outside the Mirage, with its eruptions of fire and smoke, already seems routine. This year's must-see spectacle was at Caesar's Palace, where larger-than-life animatronic gods greet strollers in an indoor mall that looks like an outdoor Roman piazza.

But for 80,000 visitors, Vegas' most marvelous event was the annual Consumer Electronics Show with its acres of products, prototypes and deals. Startling demonstrations of video components bearing new or improved technologies pulled the biggest crowds, while home theater products, showing new levels of sophistication, lent substance to the upbeat mood.

The inventiveness on display at the individual exhibits set a feisty, competitive tone. Pioneer showed a new type of laserdisc player, Go-Video displayed a line of seven dual-well VCRs, and 3DO promised a new kind of multimedia player. In fact, most varieties of product—TV sets, camcorders, VCRs, laserdisc and game systems—could boast a few innovations among the hundreds of models planned for the coming months.

Last year's innovations were also recognized as *Video Magazine* used the occasion of the show to present ViVA Gold! awards ("The Year's Best," Jan. '93) to the makers and producers of the best products and programs of 1992.

A flurry of companies showed TV sets using the wide 16:9 aspect ratio developed for HDTV transmissions. However, with HDTV still at least a couple of years away, widescreen NTSC sets are being introduced this year. Expect no bargains. Prices will range from about \$4,500 to \$6,000, but the sets will be packed with high-end features, including second tuners. Thomson leads the pack with the 34-inch RCA and ProScan CinemaScreen TVs it hoped to offer at the tail end of '92 (see "Widescreen Dawn," Nov. '92). The sets are available now in limited numbers in a

few cities, with a full rollout planned for summer.

Philips and Sharp also demonstrated 34-inch direct-view models, with Philips' set scheduled to hit stores around June. Sharp, Toshiba, Samsung and Goldstar showed widescreen sets too, but lack plans for U.S. introductions. While the sets are flashy, the market is not likely to be large. RCA estimated it would sell no more than 15,000 16:9 sets in the first year.

The 16:9 format is not limited to tube TVs. Panasonic showed a 50-inch widescreen projection set dubbed CinemaVision expected this spring for \$5,499.

Virtually all the sets boast features viewers can use to control the shape and placement of images, including zoom and stretch adjustments, split screens, screen scrolling, and picture-in-picture and picture-out-of-picture modes, better known as PIP and POP. POP lets viewers use the vertical letterbox spaces that will flank the conventional 4:3 images displayed within 16:9 frames. (We'll have more to say about these features as the sets become available.)

The most original camcorder at the show was Sharp's \$2,199 Hi8 ViewCam, which uses a four-inch LCD monitor as a kind of mammoth viewfinder. A 12x lens, with image stabilization, is mounted on the side of the monitor. Crowds swarmed around the display, waiting for a chance to try one. Our own first impression is that the ViewCam is remarkably easy to hold and use.

On the miniature side of home video, companies ingeniously explored off-beat uses for LCD projection. Virtual Vision, an entrepreneurial company based in Redmond, Washington, devised an unusual set of video goggles by applying principles from "smart cockpit" research for pilots. Light is projected downward through a tiny LCD panel in the lid of the goggles. A mirror near the nosepiece reflects the image into a virtual space that appears to float a few feet in front of the person wearing the goggles.



Feed Your Head:
Prototype of Sega's virtual-reality game goggles.



Home DBS:
Small-RCA dish and receiver (below) for DirecTV reception.



HD Head Start: Pioneer HD laser player and HDTV, on sale now in Japan.

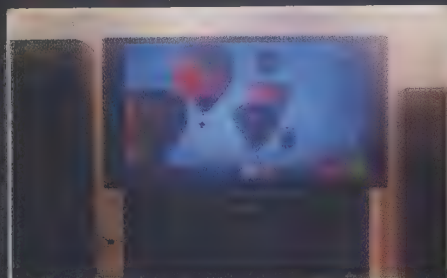
This story was written by Lancelot Braithwaite, Brent Butterworth, Kenneth Korman and Stan Pinkwas.

3DO, RCA CONVENTION CENTER PHOTOS: LARRY JOHNSON



Wide Shoulders:
Thomson's wide-screen ProScan TV atop a trio of new RCA VCRs.

Top Guns:
Video Magazine editor James M. Barry (right) and publisher Eric Schwartz (left) flank the winners of our 1992 VIVA Gold awards, presented at CES, for last year's best products and programs.



Films As Intended: Panasonic's 16:9 projection TV.



Lifelike Moves: Flashback, U.S. Gold's Sega game.



Poles Apart:
Bang & Olufsen's tubular Beolab 6000 amplified speakers (right) and Beocenter 2500 music center.

gles. A backpack carries a TV tuner and jacks for camcorders and other video sources. The goggles should be available in April for less than \$900.

VideoSnap, based in Los Angeles, also found a new use for LCD projection, as it proved in closed-door demonstrations of a new video printer called Magic Moments. The printer works by projecting a TV or other video image through a tiny color LCD panel onto a five-inch screen extending from the Magic Moments chassis. Rather than simply watch the image, the user can hit a button on the remote control and print the image on Polaroid SX-70 film, a cartridge of which is housed within Magic Moments.

VideoSnap founder Vincent Donohoe says his printer will be more portable and less costly than conventional video printers, and more accessible since Polaroid film is so widely distributed. Magic Moments is expected to be introduced later this year for about \$500.

Virtual reality reared its head at Sega as well as Virtual Vision. The show's hottest game company is planning its own virtual-reality goggles, which it hopes to market later this year for a breakthrough price of less than \$200. Wearers will be enclosed in a dimensional videogame world in which they will see not only the game in front of their eyes, but the landscape behind them should they turn around to look.

On a much larger scale, DirecTV, the Hughes Communication project to transmit TV by satellite to homes with small dishes, previewed its forthcoming components, which are being built by RCA. They include a small, 18-inch satellite antenna, a receiver about the size of a small VCR and a remote control. The cost will be \$699 for a basic system and \$899 for one with a more sophisticated dish and remote control. All components bear the initials DSS for Digital Satellite System. The service, to be launched nationwide early in 1994, promises 150 channels of TV and information services, CD-quality audio and HDTV capability. ▶



Mega Pups: RCA's Nipper and Chipper.

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- And remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.*

BUYERS GUIDE

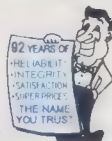
Q. Who can you call and give your credit card number to with confidence?



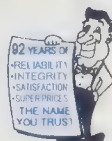
Q. Who is the world's largest camera, electronic and computer department store?



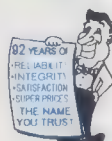
Q. Who has only factory fresh merchandise? Nothing Refurbished!



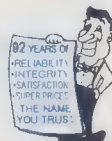
Q. Who has the largest selection of Direct Factory Authorized Brands?



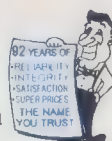
Q. Who can you call for experienced and knowledgeable sales staff?



Q. Who guarantees you the lowest purchase price?



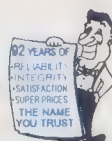
Q. Who can you call for prompt and speedy shipment?



Q. Who gives you a 10 day money back guarantee?



Q. They all come and go, but who has been here for 92 years?



ANSWER

TO FIND OUT WHO THIS 92 YEAR OLD RETAIL GIANT IS, TURN TO PAGE 52

HOME THEATER

Two years ago, many audio companies—especially those in the high end—looked down on the idea of home theater. Now, with home theater systems taking off and two-channel audio fading, even staunch traditionalists are getting into home theater in a big way.

Martin-Logan, a highly regarded maker of electrostatic, panel-type loudspeakers, showed a prototype of an electrostatic center speaker that looked more like a marine radar antenna than a home theater component. Adcom, which has won praises for affordable audiophile amps and preamps, showed its first Dolby Pro-Logic products—an A/V preamp/decoder and a decoder with amps for center and rear channels. Even Wilson Audio, manufacturer of some of the world's most expensive (and good sounding!) speakers, showed a \$40,000 home theater system based on its \$12,000/pair WATT/Puppy speakers.

In an opposite trend, THX-certified home theater systems are trickling down into more affordable price ranges. You can now get a full THX sound system for as little as \$5,000. The electronics—a Kenwood audio/video preamp/decoder and matching six-channel power amp—will set you back \$2,000, the same price as some top A/V receivers. Add Altec Lansing's \$3,000 speaker system or Boston Acoustics' \$3,700 system, and you'll have one of the best home theaters in town for about half the price it would have cost last year.

THX speakers have yet to win much praise for their music sound, but this may soon change. Two British manufacturers, B&W and KEF, demonstrated prototype systems that break from the dual-tweeter/dual-woofer arrangement used in previous THX speakers. It's tough to tell from a show demo, but both systems seem to represent real advances for THX sound.

The B&W system fits conveniently into Custom Woodwork and Design's new home theater cabinet. The cabinet is about seven feet long by 2-1/2 feet high. It holds left, center and right speakers, and a screen rises out of the back. The cabinet has been submitted to LucasArts for THX approval. This type of furniture promises to make top-notch home theater practical even for design-conscious consumers.

If you have a front projector, you'd be crazy not to check out Uni-Screen's new THX-approved perforated screen. It's nearly acoustically transparent, so you can get that big center speaker off the floor and behind the screen where it belongs.

In addition to new in-wall versions of its home theater speakers, Video

Acoustics demonstrated prototypes of new electronic processing circuits designed to solve some of the acoustic problems of home theaters. The best is the "delevator," which makes the sound from a center speaker sitting on top of a big-screen TV appear to come from the screen itself.

Definitive Technology, makers of one of our favorite home theater speaker systems, showed the BP8, a great-sounding, smaller version of last year's ViVA-award-winning BP10. The company also showed a new, larger center speaker that can be used for left and right front channels as well.

CAMCORDER

With Sharp's new Hi8 ViewCam grabbing all the attention, it was easy to miss the new introductions from Panasonic and RCA. Most of the other big names in camcorders—Sony, JVC, Canon and Hitachi—are keeping their plans under wraps 'til spring.

Panasonic's new IQ camcorders build on the strengths of its VHS-C line. All have full-size head drums to reduce picture jitter, a rare feature in a palm-size machine. First and foremost is the \$799 PV-IQ203, the first camcorder we can remember with no camera controls. That's right—you can't touch the focus, the exposure, the shutter or anything else. Hardcore hobbyists are sure to shun the PV-IQ203, but we bet point-and-shooters will love it, and that they'll find few situations where the automatic functions won't do the job.

There are three other models based on the same chassis, ranging in price from \$899 to \$1,099. They add features like a color LCD viewfinder, hi-fi stereo sound, a five-watt powered video light and conventional camera controls. The company also showed the \$1,299 VHS-C PV-43 and the \$1,599 S-VHS-C PV-S63, which resemble last year's PV-42 and PV-S62, respectively. The new models add a color LCD viewfinder and a 16:9 recording mode.

RCA's most striking newcomer is the VHS-C CC188. It has a video light built into its front—an effective, convenient design that makes it look a little like a Kawasaki Ninja motorcycle. It offers six special scene modes and random-assemble edit, which uses an infrared remote to control a VCR for automated editing. The company also showed the \$1,499 Pro883HB, which is similar to Hitachi's ViVA-award-winning Hi8 VM-H39A. The camcorder combines a slim profile and light weight with a high-resolution CCD sensor for cleaner digital effects.

Nearly obscured by the ViewCam was Sharp's \$999 VL-NIU. It's a con-

continued on page 67

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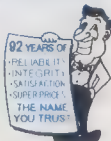
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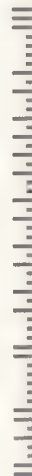
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TAPE TESTS 2

BY LANCELOT
BRAITHWAITE

A connoisseur's guide to top 8mm, Hi8 and S-VHS tapes.

Short of buying a new VCR, the best, most cost-effective way to improve the quality of your recordings is to switch to a better grade of tape. Last month, our tests of 36 blank VHS tapes offered several excellent choices. They also confirmed our impression that VHS tape has been steadily getting better. Our second round of tests—on blank 8mm, Hi8 and S-VHS cassettes—also shows significant improvements. While quality still varies among brands and grades, the overall level of performance tapes for these three formats will deliver in your camcorder or VCR has never been better.

In particular, we learned that dropouts are less likely to be a problem, especially among S-VHS tapes, which showed so few we had to double-check our testing equipment. Another pleasant surprise is that video signal-to-noise ratios, which express the amount of electronic noise within pictures, are better and more consistent than past tests have shown.

We also had the opportunity to preview a new metal-evaporated Hi8 tape soon to be introduced by Fuji. The results were so impressive the tape may signify a small leap forward for this advanced formulation.

We examined 36 different tapes in all—18 for 8mm and nine each for Hi8 and S-VHS—representing, in

most cases, the most popular offerings of a dozen major manufacturers. Except in two instances, we tested four cassettes of each tape.

Here's what we found: Among the 8mm tapes, the top performers were Fuji's Super DC P6-120 and DC P6-120 (virtually a tie), and Maxell's HGX-M P6-120. These were closely followed by Polaroid's P6-120MP, Radio Shack's Supertape HG-120 and Scotch's P6-120. The weakest were BASF's P6-60, Polaroid's P6-90 and TDK's HS-150.

Compared to our last by-the-numbers look at 8mm tapes, overall quality has

improved markedly. This was especially noticeable in lower dropout counts and better video S/N ratios.

However, for one parameter, consistency between batches, the results, compared to our last look, declined slightly.

Among Hi8 tapes, the leaders were Fuji's ME Super Double Coating E6-60 and MP DC P6-120 grades, Sony's Metal-E 120 and TDK's ME E6-120. TDK's MP P6-120 and Maxell's MP XR-M120 tapes drew up the rear, according to our results.

In this relatively small category, we looked at six 120-minute lengths, a pair of 90-minute tapes and one 60-minute grade. But the real difference was between metal-evaporated (ME) and metal-particle (MP) tapes. The terms signify two ways in which the active magnetic layers are deposited onto Hi8 tape. We tested varieties of each type. ME tapes generally outperform MP tapes, but they're not as robust. This is especially important for tapes used for editing, which need to be able to withstand frequent back-and-forth shuttling across a VCR's tape heads.

The Fuji ME Super DC tape that led this field is actually an MP tape designed to exhibit performance characteristics more typical of an ME tape. Already sold in Japan, it's brand new here and won't be available until about June.



We were able to acquire an early sample of a single cassette, and the strong results suggest Fuji's engineers have indeed advanced Hi8 tape technology.

Of the nine S-VHS tapes we tested, the top guns were Fuji's Super VHS Pro ST-120, JVC's Super VHS Pro XZ 120 and Sony's Visual Excellence ST-120. The weakest were BASF's ST-120 and JVC's Super VHS Master XG 120.

Within no other format have engineers made as much progress reducing dropouts. We measured no 15-microsecond dropouts and only one five-microsecond dropout on all the S-VHS tapes we tested. The results were so startling we initially thought our testing equipment had broken. A thorough checking process proved this not to be the case. We were also surprised to observe the relatively small differences in performance that S-VHS tapes displayed on the various signal-to-noise ratios which we measured.

SETTING THE STAGE

To develop our ratings, which range from excellent to poor, as detailed in the accompanying "Key to the Tapes," we tested three samples of each tape, taken from different production batches, for all the performance characteristics charted in the following pages. We used a fourth sample to count dropouts. Since the linear audio track is near the edge of the tape in S-VHS, we also examined the edges of a sample of each S-VHS tape under a microscope for signs of damage during production. There were none.

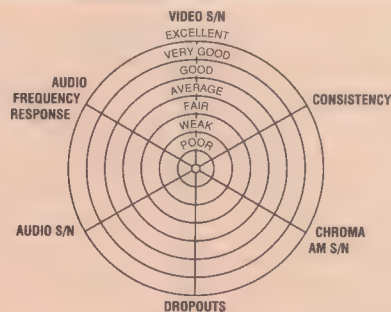
We evaluated the tapes following the same protocol described in last month's "VHS Tape Tests." For each 8mm tape, we measured its video, chroma AM and analog audio signal-to-noise ratios, its AFM audio frequency response and the consistency of the performance of samples taken from different production batches. We also counted dropouts.

For Hi8 and S-VHS tapes, we measured two additional characteristics—the luminance S/N ratio and the output loss at 5 megahertz. In addition, the chroma AM S/N ratio was measured for the Hi8 or S-VHS signal component of each format. This is a measure of how electronic noise affects the part of the signal

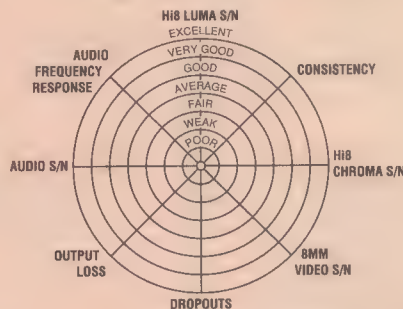
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Key To The Tapes

8mm TAPE



	Video S/N ¹	Chroma AM S/N ¹	Audio S/N ¹	Consistency Between Batches ²	Dropout Count ³	Audio Frequency Response ⁴
Excellent	+0.7 or more	+1.1 or more	+0.3 or more	0	0 - 4	50 - 20,000
Very Good	+0.5 to +0.6	+0.7 to +1.0	+0.2	0.1	5 - 9	50 - 20,000
Good	+0.2 to +0.4	+0.3 to +0.6	+0.1	0.2	10 - 14	50 - 20,000
Average	-0.1 to +0.1	-0.2 to +0.2	0	0.3	15 - 19	50 - 20,000
Fair	-0.4 to -0.2	-0.6 to -0.3	-0.1	0.4	20 - 24	50 - 20,000
Weak	-0.6 to -0.5	-1.0 to -0.7	-0.2	0.5	25 - 29	50 - 20,000
Poor	-0.7 or less	-1.1 or less	-0.3 or less	0.6 or more	30 or more	50 - 20,000

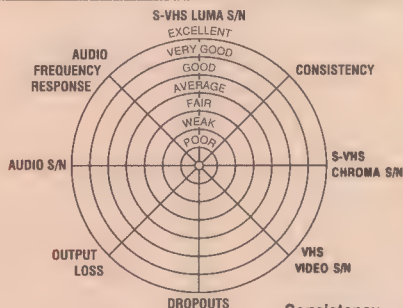


Hi8 TAPE



	Video S/N ¹	DROPOUTS			
	Luma S/N ¹		Consistency Between Batches ²	Dropout Count ³	Audio Frequency Response ⁴
	Chroma AM S/N ¹	Output Loss ¹			
Excellent	+1.5 or more	+0.9 or more	0	0 - 4	50 - 20,000
Very Good	+1.0 to +1.4	+0.5 to +0.8	0.1	5 - 9	50 - 20,000
Good	+0.5 to +0.9	+0.3 to +0.4	0.2	10 - 14	50 - 20,000
Average	-0.4 to +0.4	-0.2 to +0.2	0.3	15 - 19	50 - 20,000
Fair	-0.9 to -0.5	-0.5 to -0.3	0.4	20 - 24	50 - 20,000
Weak	-1.4 to -1.0	-0.8 to -0.6	0.5	25 - 29	50 - 20,000
Poor	-1.5 or less	-0.9 or less	0.6 or more	30 or more	50 - 20,000

S-VHS TAPE

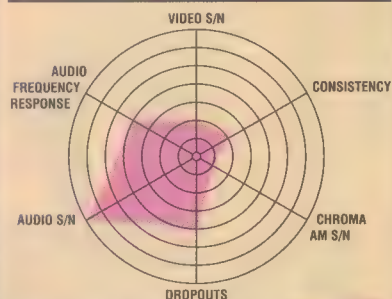


	DROPOUTS				Consistency	Dropout	Audio
	Video S/N ¹	Chroma AM S/N ¹	Luma S/N ¹	Audio ² /S/N ¹	Between Batches ²		Count ³
Excellent	+0.5 or more	+0.3 or more	+0.9 or more	0	0	0 - 4	100 - 9,000
Very Good	+0.4 to +0.5	+0.2	+0.5 to +0.8	0.1	5 - 9	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000
Good	+0.2 to +0.3	+0.1	+0.3 to +0.4	0.2	10 - 14	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000
Average	+0.1 to -0.1	0	-0.2 to +0.2	0.3	15 - 19	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000
Fair	-0.3 to -0.2	-0.1	-0.5 to -0.3	0.4	20 - 24	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000
Weak	-0.5 to -0.4	-0.2	-0.8 to -0.6	0.5	25 - 29	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000
Poor	-0.6 or less	-0.3 or less	-0.9 or less	0.6 or more	30 or more	100 - 9,000	100 - 9,000

¹Variations in decibels from performance of an average tape. ²Difference between highest and lowest video S/N, in decibels. ³Average number of total dropouts. Numbers in text refer to numbers of five- and 15-microsecond dropouts. ⁴Measured in Hertz.

8mm TAPE TESTS

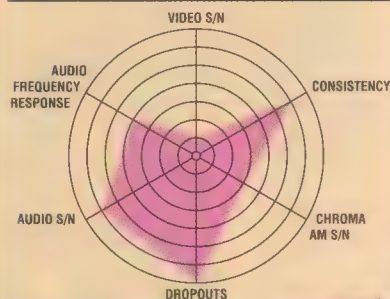
BASF P6-60



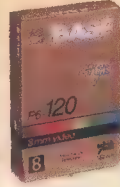
BASF P6-60 is among the weakest tapes, scoring weak on video S/N and consistency, and poor on chroma AM S/N. It was the best 8mm on audio S/N. Both the dropout count and audio frequency response are average.



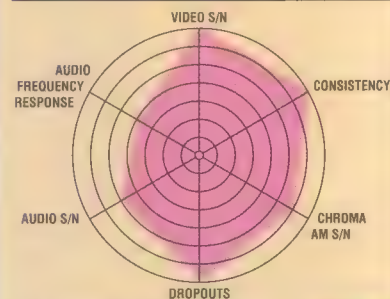
BASF P6-120



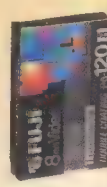
BASF P6-120 rates excellent on dropout count and very good on audio S/N and consistency between batches. Audio frequency response is average and chroma AM S/N is fair. Poor video S/N drags down this otherwise good tape.



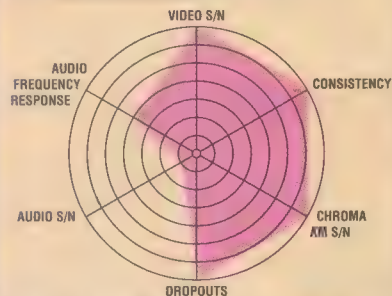
FUJI Double Coating P6-120



This tape ties for first in 8mm. Like Fuji's Super DC, the other top 8mm tape, it is excellent on video S/N, consistency and dropouts. Chroma AM S/N is very good, audio S/N is good and audio frequency response is average.



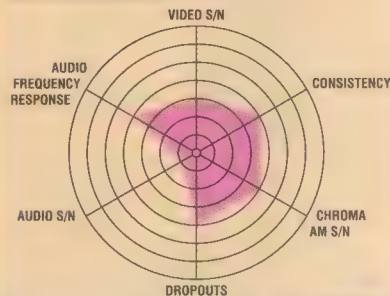
FUJI Super HG DC P6-120



Super DC ties with Fuji DC for first place in 8mm, showing better chroma S/N but poor audio S/N. It is excellent on video S/N, chroma AM S/N, consistency and dropouts. Audio frequency response is average.



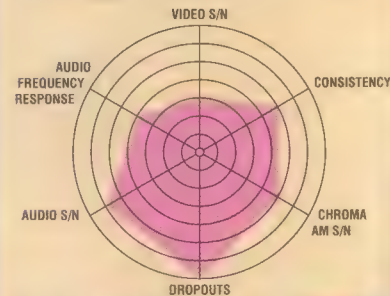
KODAK P5-90



Kodak P5-90 is average on the dropout count, chroma AM S/N, consistency and audio frequency response. Video S/N is fair and audio S/N is poor. Overall, it's slightly below average. The 5 means it was originally intended for PAL.



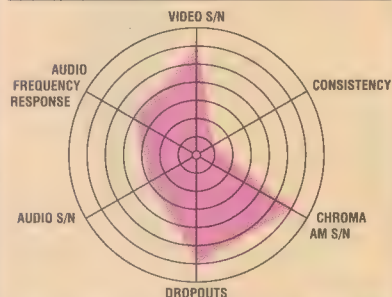
MAXELL EX-M P6-120



EX-M P6-120 is excellent on dropouts, very good on audio S/N, and good on chroma AM S/N and consistency. Its audio frequency response is average, and it's only fair on video S/N. But its overall rating makes it one of the better tapes.



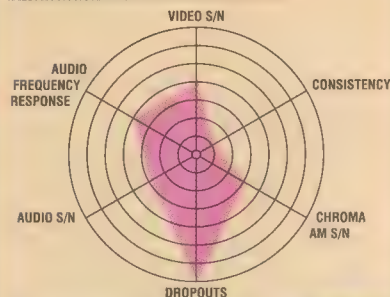
MAXELL HGX-M P6-120



HGX-M P6-120 is very good on video S/N, chroma AM S/N and dropouts. Audio frequency response is average and audio S/N is fair. Although consistency is poor, we rate it third-best in 8mm because of its picture performance.



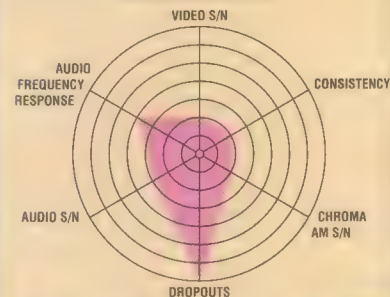
MEMOREX P6-120



Memorex P6-120 rates best on the dropout count with an excellent. Video S/N and audio frequency response are average, audio S/N and chroma AM S/N are fair, and consistency is poor. Overall performance is below average.



POLAROID P6-90

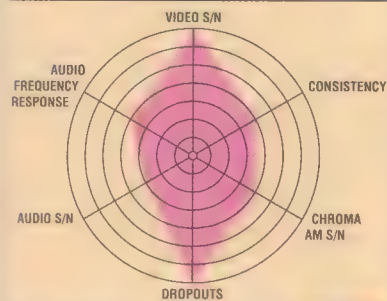


Although Polaroid P6-90 achieves an excellent dropout count, an average audio frequency response and a fair audio S/N, it is weak on video S/N, chroma AM S/N and consistency. Overall, it is among the weakest tapes we tested.



8mm TAPE TESTS

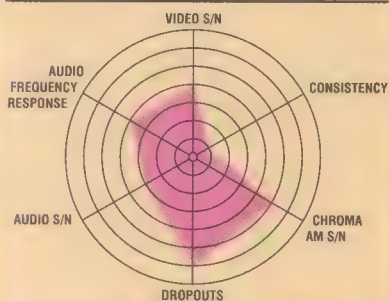
POLAROID P6-120 MP



Polaroid P6-120 is excellent on both video S/N and dropout count, while chroma AM S/N, consistency and audio frequency response are average and audio S/N is fair. A very strong performer overall, it ranks fourth or fifth in 8mm.



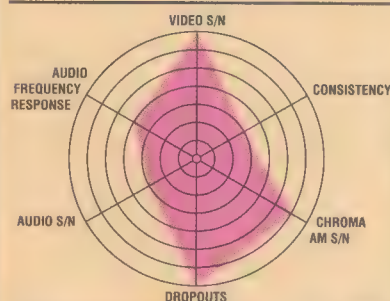
RADIO SHACK Supertape MP-120



An average performer hindered mainly by poor consistency, although picture ratings are decent. It is very good on dropouts, good on chroma AM S/N and average on video S/N and audio frequency response. Audio S/N is fair.



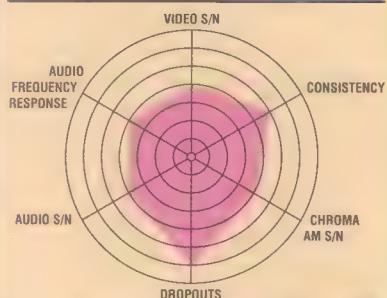
RADIO SHACK Supertape HG-120



Radio Shack HG-120 is excellent on both video S/N and dropout count. Chroma AM S/N is very good, audio frequency response is average, and audio S/N and consistency are fair. It ties for fourth in 8mm with Polaroid P6-120.



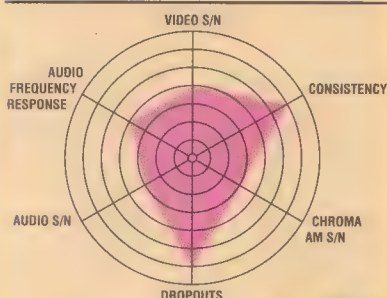
SCOTCH P6-120



Scotch P6-120 is very good on dropout count and offers good consistency between batches. Video S/N, chroma AM S/N, audio S/N and audio frequency response are all average, so overall performance is good. It ranks sixth in 8mm.



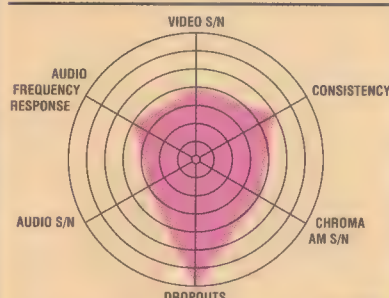
SONY Metal Particle-150



Sony MP-150 scores very good marks for dropout count and consistency. Video S/N and audio frequency response are average, and both audio S/N and chroma AM S/N are fair. Overall, it ranks just slightly above average.



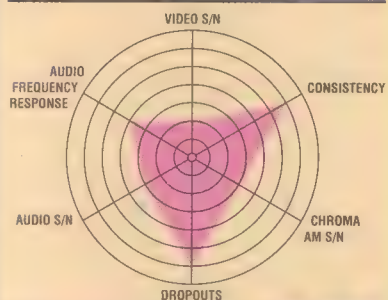
SONY Metal HG-120



This tape offers good balance and overall performance, achieving an excellent dropout count and good consistency between batches. Video S/N, chroma AM S/N and audio frequency response are average, and audio S/N is fair.



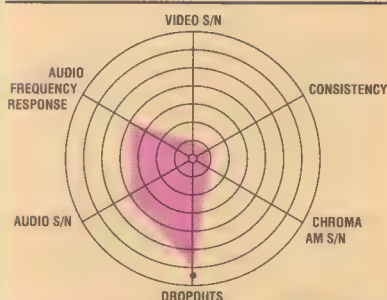
TDK HS 120



TDK's new HS 120 has problems, but new tapes usually improve. HS 120 is very good on dropouts and consistency, and fair on audio S/N and chroma AM S/N. Its audio frequency response is average and its video S/N is weak.



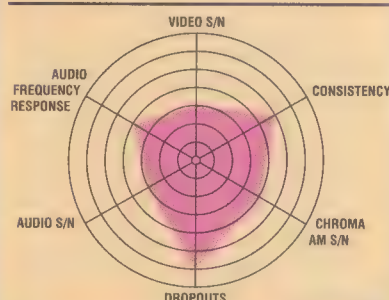
TDK HS 150



For the new HS 150, dropout count is very good and audio S/N is average. Most other ratings are poor, making it the weakest 8mm tape we measured. We expect performance to improve as production settles down.



TDK E-HG 90

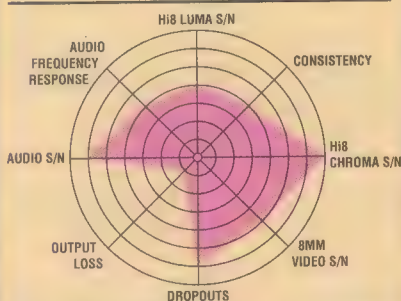


Using yet another new formulation, E-HG 90 is very good on the dropout count, good on consistency, average on chroma AM S/N and audio frequency response, and fair on video S/N and audio S/N. An average tape, overall.



Hi8 TAPE TESTS

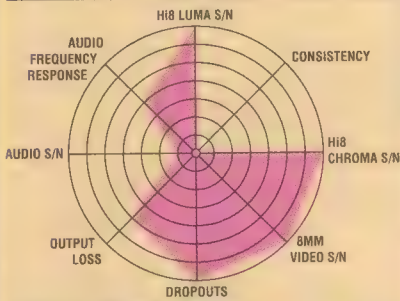
FUJI MP P6-120



An excellent tape on chroma S/N, very good on dropouts and audio S/N, good on video S/N, average on luma S/N and consistency, and poor on 5 MHz output. Yet overall quality is very good, making it the second-best Hi8 tape.



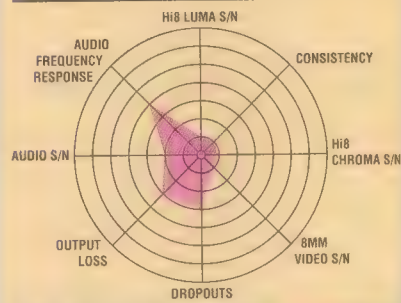
FUJI ME Super DC E6-60



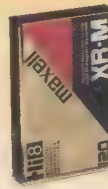
The best Hi8 tape we tested. Luma S/N, chroma AM S/N, video S/N and the dropout count are excellent. Audio S/N is poor and 5 MHz output is good. We tested only one sample, so we give no consistency rating.



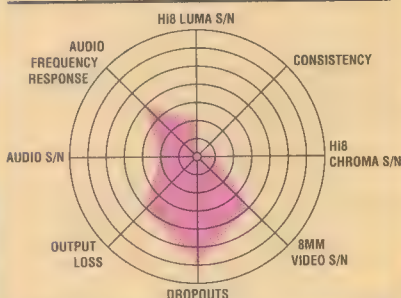
MAXELL MP XR-M 120



MP XR-M120 is poor on luma S/N, consistency, chroma AM S/N and video S/N. The dropout count and 5 MHz output are fair, audio frequency response is average and audio S/N is weak. It is the worst of the Hi8 tapes we tested.



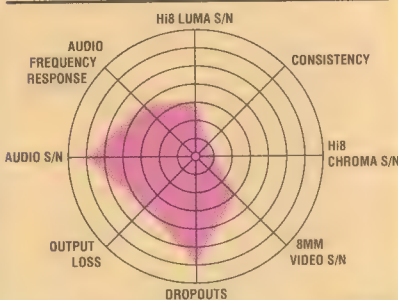
SCOTCH MP P6-120



MP P6-120 is very good on dropouts, average on video S/N and 5 MHz output, weak on luma S/N and audio S/N, and poor on chroma AM S/N. It is below average. We omit a consistency rating because we tested only one sample.



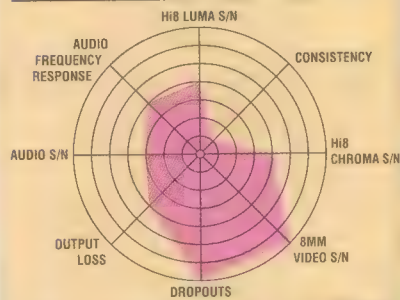
SONY MP P6-120 HMP



We rate MP P6-120 HMP very good on dropouts and audio S/N, average on 5 MHz output, fair on luma S/N and video S/N, and poor on consistency and chroma AM S/N. It is below average because the video measurements are low.



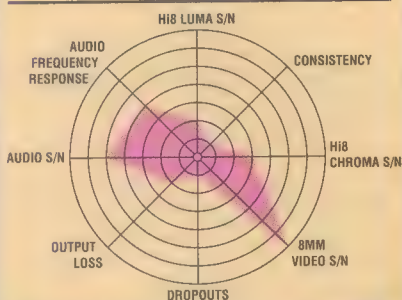
SONY Metal-E 120



Metal-E 120 rates excellent on video S/N and dropouts. Luma S/N, chroma AM S/N, audio frequency response and 5 MHz output are all average. Audio S/N is fair and consistency is poor. It is the third-strongest performer among Hi8 tapes.



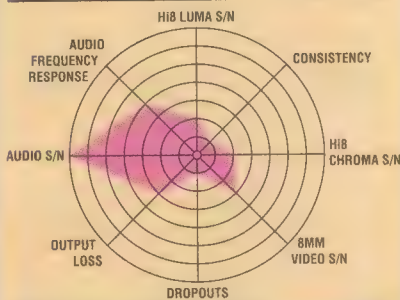
TDK MP P6-90



MP P6-90 is strong on video S/N, with an excellent rating. Audio S/N is good, chroma AM S/N is fair, luma S/N and 5 MHz output are weak, and dropout count and consistency are poor. Overall, this new formulation is below average.



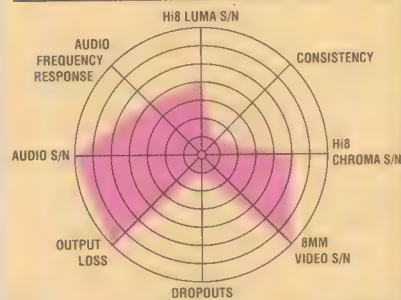
TDK MP P6-120



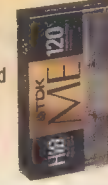
MP P6-120 achieves an excellent audio S/N. Video S/N and 5 MHz output are fair, audio frequency response is average, luma S/N and chroma AM S/N are weak, and dropouts and consistency are poor. The second-weakest Hi8 tape.



TDK ME E6-120

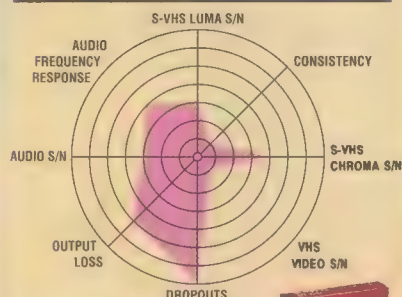


ME E6-120 is excellent on video AM S/N, 5 MHz output and audio S/N. Chroma AM S/N is good, luma S/N is average, and dropout count and consistency are poor. While it is the weakest ME tape, it outperforms all but one MP tape.



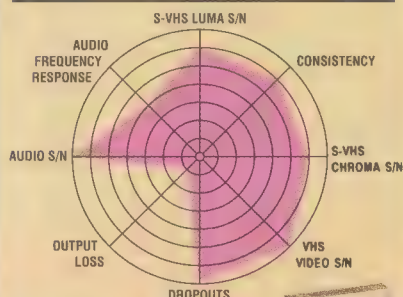
S-VHS TAPE TESTS

BASF ST-120



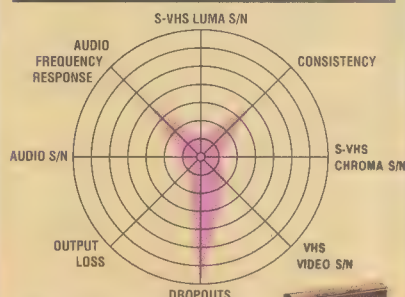
BASF ST-120 is excellent on dropout count, good on 5 MHz output and average on chroma AM S/N. Luma S/N and audio S/N are fair, and both video S/N and consistency are poor. It is the second-weakest S-VHS tape we tested.

FUJI Super VHS Pro ST-120



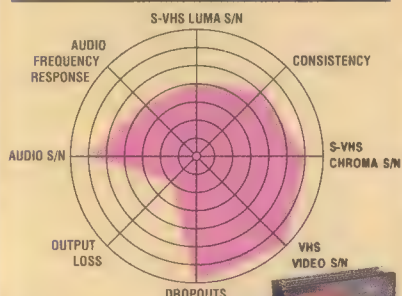
Even with poor 5 MHz output, Pro ST-120 is the best S-VHS tape we tested, excellent on video S/N, dropouts and audio S/N. Luma S/N, chroma AM S/N and consistency are very good. Audio frequency response is average.

JVC Super VHS Master XG120



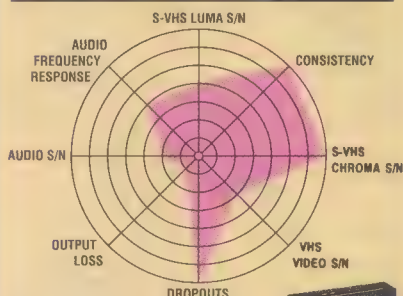
Master XG achieves an excellent dropout count, average consistency and a weak video S/N. Audio frequency response is average, but luma S/N, chroma AM S/N, 5 MHz output and audio S/N are all poor. The worst S-VHS tape tested.

JVC Pro XZ 120



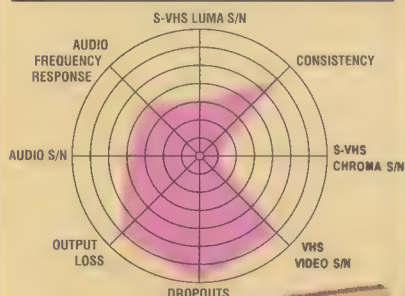
Our second-best S-VHS tape, Pro XZ is excellent on video S/N and dropout count, while chroma AM S/N and audio S/N are both very good. Consistency is good, luma S/N and audio frequency response are average and 5 MHz output is weak.

MAXELL XR-S120



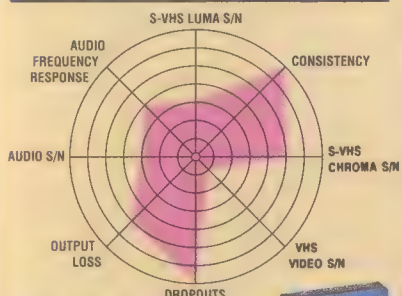
An average performer overall, Maxell XR-S120 is excellent on chroma AM S/N, consistency and dropout count. Luma S/N and audio frequency response are average, video S/N is fair, audio S/N is weak and 5 MHz output is poor.

PANASONIC XD ST-120



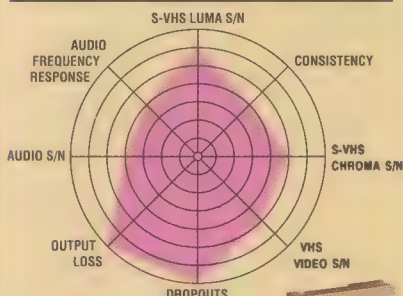
Panasonic XD ST-120 is excellent on dropouts and very good on video S/N, consistency and 5 MHz output. Audio S/N and audio frequency response are average, luma S/N is fair and chroma AM S/N is poor. Overall performance is average.

SCOTCH ST120



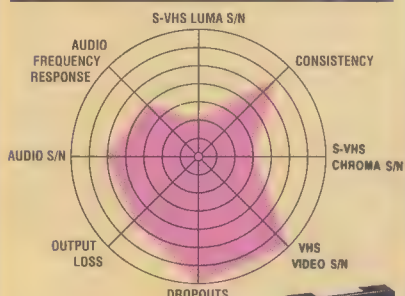
Despite excellent ratings on dropout count and consistency between batches, Scotch ST120 is below average. Chroma AM S/N and 5 MHz output are both good, luma S/N and audio S/N are fair, and video S/N is poor.

SONY Visual Excellence ST-120



This tape is excellent on 5 MHz output and dropouts. Luma S/N is very good, video S/N and chroma AM S/N are good, and audio S/N, audio frequency response and consistency are average. The third-best S-VHS tape tested.

TDK XP SuperPro ST-120



XP Super Pro rates average, scoring excellent ratings on video S/N and the dropout count. Consistency between batches is very good, chroma AM S/N is fair and luma S/N is weak.

TAPES & DISCS

N E W R E L E A S E S

FEATURE FILMS

The Last of the Mohicans

1992. Daniel Day-Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, Russell Means; dir. Michael Mann. Hi-fi surround, letterboxed, cc. (R) 113 min. \$94.98. FoxVideo.

The Last of the Mohicans has it all—action, romance, great scenery, outsized characters and even a little history. Best of all, it has a beefed-up Daniel Day-Lewis as Hawkeye, the adopted Mohican, hurtling through the colonial wilderness like a young animal. What woman could resist him? Certainly not Clara (Madeleine Stowe), the British colonel's daughter who finds him preferable to Heyward (Steven Waddington), the stiff young officer who's been courting her.

These two, and Clara's sister Alice (Jodhi May), must rely on Hawkeye and his native father (Russell Means) and brother (Eric Schweig) to get them to safety when they get caught up in the chaos of the French and Indian Wars. Michael Mann (*Thief*, *Manhunter*) has



Prairie Fire: Madeleine Stowe and Daniel Day-Lewis heat things up in *The Last of the Mohicans*.



Long Live the King: A convention of Elvis impersonators makes any *Honeymoon in Vegas* complete.

made Hawkeye a prototypical American in the mold of his previous film protagonists—he's beholden to nothing, and regards the laws of "society" as irrelevant. The concept works nicely in the 1757 frontier setting, which is impressively recreated, with the siege of Fort William Henry re-enacted nearly full-scale. The violence is hair-raising, but you are left little doubt that this is how people killed each other in that time and place. One small problem: Hawkeye and Clara seem more idealized than human.

The laserdisc, when it arrives, will be letterboxed at the 2.35 anamorphic aspect ratio of the theatrical release. The tape is letterboxed at 1.9, which is better than nothing but still engenders a noticeable pan or two. Happily, the subtitles for the native dialog have been moved to the lower black stripe.

—Sol Louis Siegel

Honeymoon in Vegas

1992. Nicolas Cage, James Caan, Sarah Jessica Parker; dir. Andrew Bergman. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 95 min. priced for rental. New Line.

Nothing ruins a guy's style like a deathbed promise to his mother—especially a promise to never, ever marry. So when neurotic gumshoe Jack Singer (Nicolas Cage) finally proposes an instant Nevada marriage and the requisite *Honeymoon in Vegas* to his stoic girlfriend, it seems his life is finally taking a turn for the better. But then...snake eyes! On the morning of their wedding, Jack manages to lose Betsy (Sarah Jessica Parker) in a high-stakes poker match to the decidedly unsavory Tommy Korman (James Caan). The balance of *Honeymoon* consists of one long turgid chase as Jack frantically trails his would-

EDITOR'S CHOICE

by

kenneth korman

be bride and her would-be owner to Hawaii and back, all amidst a torrent of Elvis impersonators descending on Vegas for their annual convention.

If you're looking for trouble, you came to the right place: Elvis impersonators are the rubber chickens of baby-boom humor, and Bergman whacks you in the face with them until they cease to amuse. More problematic is the fact that Cage and Caan are even less flesh-and-blood than the Elvis impersonators, and certainly less sympathetic. Real people in surreal situations—that's funny, and Bergman has made the concept work splendidly in the past. But the best *Honeymoon* has to offer are silly situations and—excepting Betsy—cardboard characters who merely progress from stiff to dog-eared.

One hates to think that the honeymoon is over between writer/director Andrew Bergman and fans of sophisticated slapstick. But *Honeymoon in Vegas* shows the author of the hilarious *The In-Laws* and the auteur of the sidesplitting *The Freshman* now stuck in a formula that comes closer to self-parody than Elvis ever did.

—John Walker



Making Movies: Robert De Niro and Robert Wuhl find film a complicated business in *Mistress*.

Mistress

1992. Robert De Niro, Robert Wuhl; dir. Barry Primus. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 112 min. \$92.98. LIVE.

Like *The Player*, *Mistress* is less about Hollywood moviemaking than Hollywood dealmaking. While it lacks the all-star cameos and mordant satire of Robert Altman's film, this first release from Robert De Niro's Tribeca studio makes the most of an intelligent script that features an unusual number of well-written characters.

Robert Wuhl stars as a once-hot director now making a living shooting instructional videos. Years ago he wrote a

script, about a painter who commits suicide, that was of great personal meaning to him but which no studio would finance because he refused to soften the ending. Now, an independent producer (Martin Landau) wants to help him get the movie made. He has three backers in mind, but there's a catch: Each demands that the movie provide a juicy role for his girlfriend.

It's no surprise that the well-known names in the cast (Wuhl, De Niro, Eli Wallach, Danny Aiello, Laurie Metcalf and, in a small but key role, Christopher Walken) are as good as they are. But the same quality of writing and acting is evident in the lesser characters as well, particularly the three girlfriends (Jean Smart, Sheryl Lee Ralph and Tuesday Knight), none of whom is the bimbo she initially appears to be. Even when it teeters on the edge of farce near the end, *Mistress* is an insightful and witty movie that never loses its balance.

—M. Faust

A League of Their Own

1992. Geena Davis, Madonna, Tom Hanks; dir. Penny Marshall. Hi-fi surround, letterboxed or pan-and-scan, cc. (PG) 126 min. priced for rental. LD \$39.95. Columbia TriStar.

She could hit the ball a country mile. Behind the plate, she stopped base stealers cold. And she was a born leader who could spur losers to victory. Too bad Dottie Hinson was a girl.

Inspired by the real-life women's pro baseball league launched during World War II, *A League of Their Own* takes a sympathetic, sometimes compelling look at these diamond pioneers. Though director Penny Marshall serves up plenty of dumb jokes, she also exploits the story's melodramatic possibilities at every turn, producing an overblown epic that never comes into focus.



Fans of Woody Allen's masterpiece *Manhattan* may remember Allen's onscreen character as the writer of a fictitious television talk show called *Human Beings*—Wow! It's hard to imagine a more appropriate subtitle for Michael Palin's *Pole to Pole* (A&E; VHS \$69.95),



Michael Palin

the sequel to his 1991 ViVA Gold!-award-winning *Around the World in 80 Days*. The ex-Monty Python member and intrepid explorer again finds himself crossing the globe under difficult circumstances, this time trying to stay close to the 30° E line of longitude without resorting to (much) air travel. Palin's at his best interacting with the real-life characters he encounters, from a Zambian witch doctor to the young Japanese man determined to ride his motorcycle across Antarctica.

As in *80 Days*, his breezy style and low-key humor keep things moving, and allow our incredibly diverse world to serve as star of the show. I had no problems completing the trek, despite its 400-minute running time. When the forthcoming laserdisc edition crosses my desk, I suspect I'll be traveling *Pole to Pole* again.

A journey of a different sort was required of rock songwriter/musician Elvis Costello and classical stalwarts the Brodsky Quartet when they crossed musical boundaries to collaborate on *The Juliet Letters* (Warner Reprise; VHS \$19.98, laserdisc \$29.98). This long-form video is far more engrossing than the compact disc it was intended to promote—as presented on screen, the ideas that inspired the project prove as exciting as the musical results. Costello and company developed the first “vocal quartet,” with the four string instruments and voice serving as five equal elements. The passion and intelligence of all the participants shine through. With more projects like this, home video could become the dominant music format industry observers have long foreseen.

Anyway, the Rockford Peaches aren't dull. Along with standout Dottie Hinson (Geena Davis), the team includes little sister Kit Keller (Lori Petty), who resents her sibling's talents, trampy "All the Way" Mae Mordabito (Madonna), who saves her best moves for after the game, and other offbeat types. Add manager Jimmy Dugan (Tom Hanks), a drunken ex-major league great who slowly comes to respect his charges, and prepare for zany hijinks.

Despite the obvious plot, the cast sparkles. Davis gives a memorable portrayal of a complex woman who balks at taking her new career seriously, while Petty skillfully conveys the volatile mixture of admiration and anger that can afflict a kid sister, and Madonna deftly spoofs her image. Hanks is trapped in a caricature, although standout supporters such as Rosie O'Donnell, Jon Lovitz and David Strathairn pick up the slack. Running more than two hours. *A League of Their Own* begs for editing, but its choice moments ring true.

—Jon Young

Light Sleeper

1992. Willem Dafoe, Susan Sarandon; wr./dir. Paul Schrader. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 103 min. \$92.98. LIVE.

According to *Light Sleeper* writer/director/insomniac Paul Schrader, the main character of John LeTour came to him in a dream. But this cinematic re-

during their high-rise coke raps as a negative perk of the job. LeTour worries about his future—but that's all he does.

LeTour's passive routine is temporarily reversed by a chance meeting with his old flame Marianne (Dana Delany), but their encounter leads to a cycle of tragedy that is Schrader's trademark, with LeTour inevitably sucked into the eye of a storm. The thematic parallels with Schrader's earlier work are apparent—replete with a climax that's a virtual homage to *Taxi Driver*. But Dafoe and Sarandon lift the film over its indulgence. If you want to avoid Armageddon, *Light Sleeper* may be your wake-up call.

—JW

Stalin

1992. Robert Duvall, Joan Plowright, Maximilian Schell; dir. Ivan Passer. Hi-fi surround, cc. (NR) 173 min. \$92.99. LD \$39.98. MGM/UA.

Who was the worst man of the century? This made-for-cable production makes a strong case for Stalin, the Georgian peasant of deceptive cunning who, in the name of Leninist socialism, turned the Soviet Union into a charnel house.

The film's first half is impressive, introducing us to the loyal revolutionary (Robert Duvall) as the czar is abdicating and Lenin (Maximilian Schell) returns to Russia to complete his revolution. Director Ivan Passer, who can be very good when working on an intimate scale, makes much of how Stalin took the rivals who looked down on him and played them against each other, using terror and brutality to consolidate his power. The second half, covering the various purges, leaves out a good deal due to time limitations, and the from-the-top perspective keeps us from comprehending the true scale of Stalin's crimes.

Duvall is remarkable throughout; he brings the dictator's desperate need for complete control right to the surface, even though his tone is usually one of ingenuous affability. There are a lot of



White-Collar Crime: Robert Duvall won a Golden Globe for his performance as the brutal Stalin.

good people behind him doing strong character bits, and the physical production, shot largely on actual locations, is as good as you could hope for. *Stalin* may not deliver all the goods, but what we get is of high quality.

—SLS

Cool World

1992. Gabriel Byrne, Brad Pitt, Kim Basinger; dir. Ralph Bakshi. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 101 min. priced for rental. LD letterboxed \$34.95. Paramount.

Cool World, cartoonist Ralph Bakshi's mix of live action and animation, can't lay claim to the technical wizardry of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* or the elaborate Disney animation of *Beauty and the Beast*. But what it lacks in polish, it makes up for in wit and energy.

Cool World takes its name from a comic-book series set in a bizarre version of Las Vegas and created by incarcerated artist Gabriel Byrne. Byrne only *thinks* he created it: *Cool World* turns out to be an alternate universe, from which he has been manipulated into creating a conduit to the real world. His animated (in every sense of the word) seducer is Holly Would, an ambitious vamp who makes Jessica Rabbit look like Jane Hathaway. When Holly crosses over into the real world and becomes Kim Basinger, the movie's titillation level sinks dramatically.

Bakshi spends as little time as possible with the silly plot. He's far more interested in detailing this wildly elaborate, comically violent cartoon world. Imagine Ren and Stimpy at loose on Tim Burton's storyboards for *Batman*. On



Counting Sheep: Willem Dafoe is a *Light Sleeper* in Paul Schrader's latest film.

turn to form hovers in just the sort of eerie dream state one might expect of the man who authored the blurry morality of *Taxi Driver*, *Blue Collar* and *Hardcore*. The focus of *Light Sleeper* is LeTour (Willem Dafoe), a middle-aged delivery boy for an upscale cocaine dealer named Ann (Susan Sarandon). An ex-user, LeTour services Ann's customers as if he were delivering Chinese take-out, en-

video you can take your time to catch Bakshi's little grace notes, like a fleeting appearance by Pinocchio and Gepetto in the belly of a screaming monster. And, with a great alternative-rock soundtrack featuring Ministry, Electronic and others, you'll want to play this movie loud.

—MF

Mediterraneo

1992. Claudio Bigagli, Diego Abatantuono; dir. Gabriele Salvatores. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled, cc. (R) 90 min. \$99.95. Paramount.

As genial—and challenging—as a greeting card, *Mediterraneo* will appeal to anyone weary of life's workaday woes. The comic fantasy follows the misadventures of a regiment of Italian misfits, sent to secure an obscure Greek island during World War II. An intended four-month stay stretches into years when these bumbling troops lose contact with the outside world and find themselves seduced by the locals' idyllic existence. However predictable the plot, the gorgeous scenery makes it easy to believe Shangri-La awaits on an Aegean beach.

In the time-honored tradition of American war movies, this mild saga features an array of colorful characters, including the sensitive lieutenant (Claudio Bigagli) who paints pictures when off duty, the earthy sergeant (Diego Abatantuono), the country boy (Gigio Alberti) who takes his donkey everywhere, the lonely husband (Claudio Bisio) who misses his pregnant wife, and the shy guy (Giuseppe Cederna) who's a virgin. Of course, a gorgeous whore with a heart of gold (Vanna Barba) cheerfully remedies that shortcoming, underscoring the comic-book quality of the proceedings. Presented with subtitles, *Mediterraneo* is harmless escapism, unless you're allergic to clichés. Still, honoring it with the Best Foreign Film Oscar gives fluff an undeserved respectability.

—JY

LASERDISCS

The Compleat Tex Avery

1992 comp. Anim. Digital mono. (NR) 540 min. CLV 10 sides. \$99.98. MGM/UA.

Let the buyer beware. While the use of an archaic spelling sort of lets its producers off the hook, this set doesn't contain every cartoon supervised by the legendary animation genius Tex Avery.



Heavy Viewing:
The Compleat Tex Avery compiles nine hours of the animator's work.

This five-disc set covers only the work he did for MGM, although "only" may not be the right word—there are 66 shorts here, nine hours worth of dropping jaws, popping eyes, self-consciously "corny" gags and renditions of "Frankie and Johnny" (the tune swells up every time one of Avery's beloved cartoon sexpots appears). If the set ignores Avery's Warner Bros. output, well, much of it can be found on MGM/UA's three volumes (so far) of *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes*; it's there you'll learn that Avery's famous hair-in-the-projector-gate gag didn't originate in 1947's "Musical Maestro" as commonly thought, but in 1941's "Aviation Vacation."

Thirty of this set's cartoons have already been compiled on two previous discs, but what remains is hardly dross. Some politically incorrect cartoons that have been swept under the rug in the past pop up here (including the racist "Uncle Tom's Cabana"—pretty bad, but no *Birth of a Nation*). And the later stuff, while not up to the standards of classics like "Swing Shift Cinderella" or "Screwball Squirrel," is fascinating nonetheless, with Avery frequently turning his acid wit on the movies' emerging enemy, television. *Compleat* is an extravagant purchase, and certainly not for everyone. But the collectors it was meant for know who they are. —Glenn Kenny

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen

1989. Oliver Reed, Uma Thurman; dir. Terry Gilliam. Digital surround, letterboxed. (PG) 126 min. plus supplement. CAV 6 sides. \$124.95. Criterion.

Monty Python and the Holy Grail

1975. John Cleese, Michael Palin, Graham Chapman; dirs. Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones.

Digital stereo, letterboxed. (PG) 91 min. CLV 2 sides. \$49.95. Criterion.

Terry Gilliam is one of the most original filmmakers working in Hollywood. Unfortunately, his more dazzling visions—like *Brazil* and especially *Baron Munchausen*—are so ambitious, both studios and audiences have been slow to appreciate his gifts. Following its success with the more modestly conceived *The Fisher King*, Criterion has just released two more Gilliam jewels, both with enlightening commentary by the director.



Red Baron: John Neville stars as the inimitable Munchausen in Terry Gilliam's outrageous movie.

As befits its subject material, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* is wonderfully overdone. Legend has it the real baron, an 18th-century raconteur, told the tallest tales in the world. Who else but Gilliam would make a hero of such a man? As the boastful Munchausen, John Neville flies to visit the King of the Moon, dances with the goddess Venus, camps in the belly of a monster whale and single-handedly defeats a Turkish army. As in his earlier *Time Bandits*, Gilliam has given us a "children's picture" that vividly captures the fantasy and imagination of childhood, even for adults.

The disc itself is one of the finest transfers I've ever seen. All the richness and scope of this visual feast are intact, and this release easily surpasses the quality of the earlier RCA/Columbia laserdisc. Though the story has been filmed numerous times since the silent

TAPES & DISCS

era, Gilliam's version of *Baron Munchausen* is truly unique—a cinematic achievement so singular we'll probably never see a movie like it again.

Nor will we ever see another Monty Python movie like *The Holy Grail* now that Graham Chapman has passed on to what his Flying Circusmates would call "the choir invisible." Chapman's fellow Pythons Gilliam and Terry Jones co-directed this hilarious sendup of the Arthurian legends, which hasn't lost a howl since its release almost 20 years ago. Unfortunately, this long-overdue disc doesn't do the film justice at all. Quite out of character for Criterion, the print is scratchy and uneven. The jacket claims the disc was produced from "the best element available at the time of the transfer." If this is true, we hope the film will be eventually restored and that subsequent pressings will be more up to this company's usual exacting standards.

—Ron Goldberg

A Midnight Clear

1992. Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise, Frank Whaley; wr./dir. Keith Gordon. Digital surround, cc. (R) 107 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.95. VHS priced for rental. Columbia TriStar.

December 1944, in the Ardennes Forest near the French-German border. An American intelligence unit, holed up by an abandoned chateau, faces a German squad in a surprising skirmish—a snowball fight. In *A Midnight Clear*, it's a case of two factions boiled down to the same elements—scared human beings. The Germans, who want to surrender, are trying to make contact in a non-threatening way. The Americans, painfully young and already beaten down by seeing half their dozen "lost," are incredulous and suspicious, but willing to be drawn in. The alliance, however, ultimately ends in tragedy.

Poignant, honest and heartfelt, this

All Together Now: Solid ensemble acting highlights *A Midnight Clear's* uniquely human war story.



Roman Holiday: Zero Mostel gets the royal treatment in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

small independent film shines with smart, simple direction from onetime actor Keith Gordon (*Christine, Dressed to Kill*), who also adapted the William Wharton novel for the screen. A credible ensemble—including Ethan Hawke as the 19-year-old squadron leader, *Of Mice and Men's* Gary Sinise and Matt's brother Kevin Dillon—adds to the appeal of this quietly affecting drama.

The laserdisc—from Columbia TriStar, which has taken over production of its discs from Pioneer—looks good, and handles both the dimly lit indoor scenes and the blinding outdoor snowscapes well. But according to *A Midnight Clear*, not all things—like friends and foes—are as easy to distinguish.

—April P. Bernard

The Dressmaker

1973. Peter Postheltwaite, Jane Horrocks; dir. Jim O'Brien. Digital mono. (NR) 92 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.95. Lumivision.

The Dressmaker is Nellie (Joan Plowright), a dour old maid who lives with her younger sister and 50-year-old party girl, Margo (Billie Whitelaw). Together, buried beneath the stolid abandon of wartime Liverpool, they've raised their weepy teen-age niece Rita (Jane Horrocks) with a confusing yin-yang that pits Nellie's puritanical nature against Margo's "wild" demeanor. Complicating

the issue is Rita's "Uncle Jack" (Peter Postheltwaite), the distant butcher who is actually Rita's father. When young Rita falls for a redneck Yank stationed at a nearby military base, the ensuing panic brings her guardians' emotions to the surface. The result is a plot which has been compared to Hitchcock at his best.

Directed by Jim O'Brien for Britain's Channel Four, this bright and eerie rendering of Beryl Bainbridge's 1973 novel is galvanized by the synergy of Joan Plowright and Billie Whitelaw. *The Dressmaker* is as intriguing as a muffled scream.

—JW

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

1966. Zero Mostel, Phil Silvers, Jack Gilford; dir. Richard Lester. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (NR) 97 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.95. MGM/UA.

Theater mavens revere *Forum* as Stephen Sondheim's first stage success as lyricist and composer—for the rest of us, it's a perennial funny romp in Roman togas. Director Richard Lester has disowned the movie, insisting that producer Melvin Frank usurped the director's chair, but Lester's touch is apparent—the editing recalls *A Hard Day's Night*, though the pacing seems off. MGM/UA has used a clean source, with

pale but fairly natural color, and the sound is full-bodied. *Forum* wasn't shot anamorphically, so the matting on top and bottom only cuts off picture area. MGM should have worried more about centering the film properly—judging from the credits, some of the image is chopped off on the right side.

—Bruce Eder

The Swarm

1978. Michael Caine, Katharine Ross, Richard Widmark, Richard Chamberlain, Olivia de Havilland, Fred MacMurray, Henry Fonda; dir. Irwin Allen. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (PG) 156 min. CLV 3 sides. \$34.98. Warner.

This Irwin Allen (*The Poseidon Adventure*) disaster flick contains more laughs than thrills, as cockney scientist Michael Caine tries to convince an all-star cast that African killer bees should be taken seriously. ("Are you telling me," says cranky general Richard Widmark, "that bees killed the men here?") Naturally, no one believes him, until a plane, a helicopter, a military base, a picnicking family and Fred MacMurray are all covered in honey.

The Swarm is a '50s B-flick blown up to epic proportions, with plenty of dull action and cheapo special effects, lots of inept soap opera stuff, a pile of priceless bad sci-fi dialog and a roster of big stars in small parts. The "take the money and run" prize, however, must go to Jose Ferrer, who appears just long enough to say, "Bees can't hurt me"—and immediately gets blown up in a bee-induced nuclear blast. In his case, was cash.

—Tom Soter

Looney Tunes: Curtain Calls, After Dark, Assorted Nuts

1993 comps. Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Tweety Bird; dirs. Chuck Jones, Fritz Freleng, Robert McKimson. Digital mono. (NR) 92-112 min. each. CLV 2 sides each. \$34.98 each. Warner.

Hot on the heels of MGM/UA's multivolume *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes* come Warner's entries in the great cartoon cash-in. Underappreciated in the '60s when Warner closed its animation department, the residents of Toon Town are now big business—if not high art—as baby boomers revel anew in the screwball antics of Bugs Bunny, Daffy

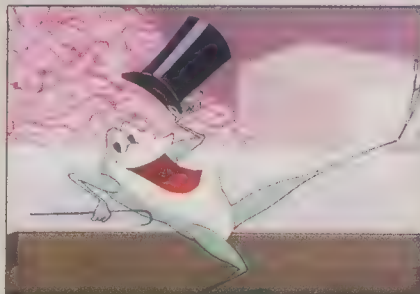
Back to Life:
Pinocchio has been restored for home video.



Duck and Elmer Fudd.

Hunts are what the frantic, anything-goes Warner shorts are full of—as well as chases, literate gags, puns (an ax-wielding villain says to Bugs that he insists on "splitting hares") and slapstick violence. The six-minute cartoons were an ode to anarchy that competitors often imitated but rarely equaled. These three discs, part of a new collection of six, come mostly from the '50s and '60s (with a pair of 1980s revival pieces), and they are mostly terrific, with a wit that is as sharp as the colors.

After *Dark* and *Assorted Nuts* (showcasing such lesser characters as the daydreaming Ralph Phillips and bulldog Marc Antony) have their moments, but the standouts are all on *Curtain Calls*. These mostly feature Bugs Bunny, the smart-aleck rabbit who was the studio's biggest star and a master of puncturing pomposity. Among the best are the brilliant parodies, "The Rabbit of Seville" and "What's Opera, Doc?" in which Elmer and Bugs replay their endless struggle as characters from Wagner's



All the Pond's a Stage: Some consider "One Froggy Evening" the perfect Looney Tunes creation.

Ring cycle (Elmer sings "Kill the Wabbit" to the Valkyries' theme).

The disc also includes the wonderful "Three Little Bops," a jazz version of the "Three Little Pigs" with music by Shorty Rogers and singing narration by Stan Freberg, and the parable "One Froggy Evening," which some consider the perfect cartoon. It's a *Twilight Zone*-style tale about a singing frog whose timing is all wrong—something you could never say about any of the loony toons who lived at Warners.

—TS

CLASSICS

Pinocchio

1940. Anim. Voices of Dick Jones, Christian Rub, Cliff Edwards; supervising dirs. Ben Sharpstein, Hamilton Luske. Hi-fi stereo. (G) 88 min. \$24.99. LD \$34.99. Special editions \$99.99. Walt Disney.

Video collectors who picked up *Pinocchio* on its last release in 1986 may feel a little cheated when they see the new version of the Walt Disney classic. Thanks to a frame-by-frame restoration, the colors are richer and the sound (now in stereo, via a soundalike process) is crisper. But the story—about the wooden puppet who wants to be a boy—is as charming as ever.

Pinocchio, Disney's feature film follow-up to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, was based on the tales of Carlo Collodi. Besides winning two Academy Awards (for the lyrical score and the song "When You Wish Upon a Star"), the cartoon served as the inspiration for such later efforts as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*.

The picture is a remarkable technical feat, involving more than 750 artists, 80 musicians, 1,500 shades of color and one million drawings. And the restoration highlights these efforts beautifully: Where the original video version seems washed out, the new one is vibrant and alive, with a richness of hue and a clarity of sound that make the cartoon characters seem as real as people.

The picaresque saga—about what it means to be human—is also helped by Cliff Edwards' delightful turn as Jiminy Cricket, some bouncy tunes ("Hi Diddle Dee" and "I've Got No Strings") and a truly terrifying sequence on Pleasure Island, when a bad boy gets his just deserts. Most kids will love it, although the heavy-handed moralizing may leave some adults longing for the loony anarchy of Donald Duck or Bugs Bunny.

That aside, collectors should consider replacing their old *Pinocchio* with this sleeker version. The video, like the puppet, has finally come alive.

—TS



On the Set:

Francis Ford Coppola (right) with Al Pacino and Andy Garcia.

The Godfather Trilogy

1992 comp. Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert Duvall, Robert De Niro, Diane Keaton, Andy Garcia; dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Hi-fi surround. (R) 583 min. Also included: *The Godfather Family: A Look Inside*. Dir. Jeff Werner. 73 min. \$199.95. LD 13 sides \$199.95. Paramount.

Gangster movies come and go, but nothing approaches *The Godfather* and its progeny. Call it a soap opera with guns, or an ode to the family, or a parable about the corruption of American innocence, but don't call it dull. Director Francis Ford Coppola's mesmerizing tale introduced many colorfully complex characters, topped by Marlon Brando's Oscar-winning comeback role as Vito Corleone, the Don who deals in death, yet loves his family above all else.

Family was what drew Coppola to the story, and what made it a resounding hit (the first two pictures won multiple Oscars). But like Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), the son with a conscience who tries in vain to flee his heritage, Coppola has never been able to escape the long shadow of his creation. Eighteen years after the first film, he returned with *Part III*, which added nothing that hadn't been said before but broadened the canvas of corruption to include the Church and Big Business.

Nonetheless, when taken together in this new 9-1/2-hour re-edit, the entire tale becomes a brooding meditation on the American Dream perverted, as Michael pursues wealth, power and respectability, only to lose his soul in the process. The saga has a grand stylistic sweep from the well-known montages of violence to the intimate moments of humor, love and sadness that humanize the many nasty characters.

All of which is a tribute to Coppola's vision, on display in this package's bonus documentary, *The Godfather Family*, which includes unusual screen tests, behind-the-scenes footage and interviews with many principals (Coppola reports that the studio threatened to hire a violence director to punch up the first film).

The Godfather Trilogy is the most epic, yet personal crime story ever made, a multilayered story that shows how murder can be hidden behind a cloak of respectability and how families can both love and hate each other at the same time. It is a striking cinematic success story, the darkest, bleakest series ever to be a major motion picture success. Don't miss it. —TS

Films of Mikio Naruse

Wife! Be Like a Rose!: 1935. B&W. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 73 min. \$79.95. *Late Chrysanthemums*: 1954. B&W. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 101 min. \$79.95. *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*: 1960. B&W. Hi-fi mono, subtitled, letterboxed. (NR) 110 min. \$79.95. *Flunky, Work Hard!*: 1931. B&W. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 28 min. \$19.95. World Artists.

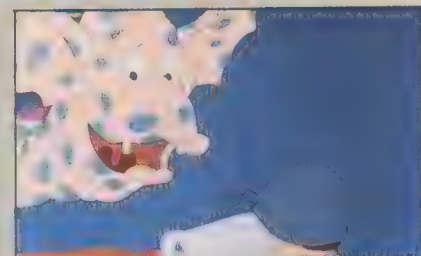
At its best, the work of Japanese filmmaker Mikio Naruse was considered the equal of his contemporaries Yasujiro Ozu and Kenji Mizoguchi. And even though he made nearly 100 films between 1930 and his death in 1967, few have been widely seen in the United States. This package of three Naruse films provides a good introduction to the various periods of the director's long and productive career.

Like Ozu and Mizoguchi, Naruse was concerned with intimate themes, particularly the role of women in Japanese society as it began to throw off ancient traditions. His first major success, *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* (1935), juxtaposes a modern woman and office worker with two of the generation before her. While her mother writes poetry bemoaning the husband who deserted her, her father's mistress struggles to support him and their children while he prospects for gold.

Late Chrysanthemums (1954), an art-house hit when it was released in the U.S. in 1985, looks at four middle-aged geisha making different plans to support themselves as they grow old. The same problem confronts the protagonist of *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (1960), a bar hostess approaching the age of 30 beset by demands from her family. She tries to face an uncertain future though still haunted by the past.

Despite their melodrama, Naruse's films fascinate with their clear-eyed realism and the economy of their visualizations. (*When a Woman Ascends the Stairs*

may be the most intimate widescreen film made, and as such works perfectly on letterboxed video.) Also available is the three-reel short *Flunky, Work Hard!*, Naruse's oldest surviving film. —MF



Colorful Critters: Shelley Duvall's *Bedtime Stories*.

Shelley Duvall's Bedtime Stories: Volumes 4-6

1992. Anim. Voices of Michael J. Fox, Christian Slater. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (NR) 25 min. each. \$12.98 each. LD \$34.98 (contains all 3 volumes). MCA/Universal.

The good news: Children's video, and the marketplace which supports it, has grown so that parents can now choose from a surfeit of quality tapes. The bad news: Innovators who advanced the field beyond Saturday morning cartoon retreads face tougher competition. Case in point: Shelley Duvall.

Her *Faerie Tale Theatre* series, live-action stories with hip scripts and all-star casts, was a milestone in quality kid-vid. Her new animated series, though, seems to be running to catch up with the trend toward cartoon storytelling by celebrity narrators. Her roster is a casting agent's dream: Michael J. Fox, Martin Short, John Candy and others, all of whom conduct themselves with the required high spirits. But the animation is bland compared to the subtle classiness of the Rabbit Ears line, or the wild inventiveness of Nickelodeon's new breed. And Duvall herself, who appears in introductory segments, threatens to become terminally unctuous in her role as modern Mother Goose.

Don't get me wrong. These *Bedtime Stories* are fine additions to a well-stocked library, but they don't demand a rush to the video store, either. And coming from the previously magical mind of Ms. Duvall, that's a disappointment.

—Marianne Meyer

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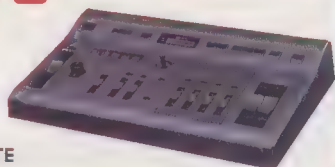
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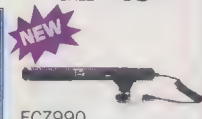
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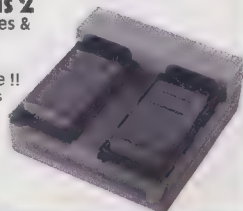
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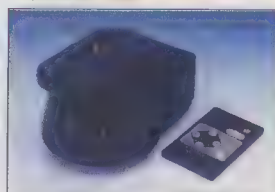


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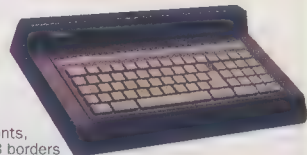
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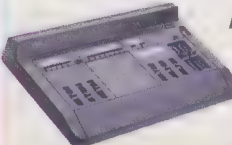
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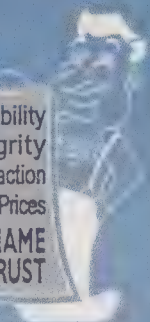
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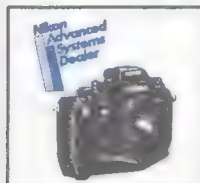
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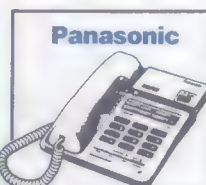


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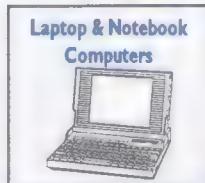


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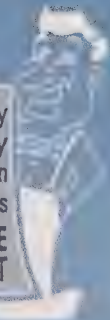
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

Berkeley in the Sixties

1990. B&W/color. Pr./dir. Mark Kitchell. Much-honored documentary on the decade that proves everything old is new again. Also new (at a sellthrough price): *Flashing on the '60s*. Mono, cc. 117 min. VHS only, \$79.95. PBS (800-282-8765).

The Clinton Inaugural Commemorative

1992-93. 2 vols. Ted Koppel and Clinton during the last three days of the election, plus coverage of all the hoopla and ceremony of the inauguration. Mono. 150 min. VHS, Beta \$39.98. MPI.

Crossing the Bridge

1992. Jason Gedrick, Stephen Baldwin, Josh Charles; wr./dir. Mike Binder. Appealing ensemble lifts this '70s coming-of-age story. Surround, cc. (R) 104 min. VHS, Beta \$94.95. Touchstone.

Early Russian Cinema:

Films Before the Revolution

1908-18. B&W. 10 vols. Recently unearthed entertainment from Tsarist Russia, highlighted by the early works of master director Evgenii Bauer as well as *The Departure of a Great Old Man*, on Tolstoy's final days. Mono, subtitled. 38-95 min. each. VHS only, \$29.95 each, \$250 set. Milestone (212-865-7449).

The Fearless Vampire Killers

1966. Jack MacGowran, Roman Polanski, Sharon Tate; dir. Polanski. Also known as

Traveling Men:

Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour and Bob Hope are on the Road again.



Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck, the flip side to Coppola's reverent telling of the Dracula legend. With trailer. Mono, letterboxed. (NR) 124 min. LD \$34.98. MGM/UA.

Feed

1992. Blows the lid off those glib soundbites that marked the presidential campaign, with satellite feeds of candidates before the cameras rolled. Also from Kevin Rafferty: the re-release of *The Atomic Cafe*, \$29.95. Stereo. (NR) 80 min. VHS only, \$59.95. First Run Features (212-243-0600).

Female

1933. B&W. Ruth Chatterton, George Brent; dir. Michael Curtiz. One of seven new entries in the titillating pre-Hays Office "Forbidden Hollywood" series: Business as usual falls by the wayside when woman exec meets her match. Mono. (NR) 60 min. VHS, Beta \$19.98. MGM/UA.

Gas Food Lodging

1992. Brooke Adams, Fairuza Balk, Ione Skye; wr./dir. Allison Anders. Small film—about a single mother and her two daughters trying to make sense of love and sex in a dusty desert town—has won big praise. Surround. (R) 101 min. VHS priced for rental. LD (letterboxed) \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

Itzhak Perlman: Virtuoso Violinist

"I Know I Played Every Note"

1977. Dir. Christopher Nupen. Three years in the life of the stellar musician, with pieces by Bazzini, Beethoven, Joplin, Bach and Vivaldi. Stereo. 79 min. VHS \$29.97. LD \$34.97. Teldec (800-333-3935).

Jumpin' at the Boneyard

1992. Tim Roth, Alexis Arquette, Danitra Vance; wr./dir. Jeff Stanzler. Brothers face the seamy side of New York City in the first film from a director taken under Lawrence Kasdan's wing. Stereo, cc. (R) 107 min. VHS only, priced for rental. Fox-Video.

Kathy Kaehler's Celebrity Step Workout

1992. With Justine Bateman, Penelope Ann Miller, Julianne Phillips, Tawny Kitaen, Jami Gertz, Beverly D'Angelo. Can this many—dare I say it—celebrity babes be wrong about the personal trainer who made Michelle Pfeiffer into the sleek Catwoman? Stereo. 100 min. VHS only, \$16.95. Columbia TriStar.

Rambling Rose

1991. Laura Dern, Robert Duvall, Diane Ladd; dir. Martha Coolidge. Captivating sleeper made even more wonderful with audio commentary from the director, an alternate ending and outtakes, and still-frame segments with storyboards, costume designs, script and more. Surround, letterboxed. (R) 115 min. LD \$74.95. Pioneer Special Editions.

The "Road to" Collection

1993 comp. B&W. Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour; various dirs. That comic trio in Singapore, Zanzibar, Morocco and "Utopia." Mono, cc. (NR) 349 min. LD \$99.98. MCA/Universal.

Labels For Less

Leslie Nielsen in *The Naked Gun 2-1/2: The Smell of Fear*



Count on something wild in April. The wild West comes from Turner with *Annie Oakley*, *Blood on the Moon* and *Wagon Master* reduced to \$14.98, and from Columbia TriStar with *Old Gringo*, *The Man From Laramie* and a new-to-video John Wayne short, *Texas Cyclone*, at \$14.95. Or brave the tropical wilds of CBS/Fox's *George of the Jungle*, with four new \$9.98 volumes. Paramount's *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, now \$19.95, revealed Francis Ford Coppola to be a wild man on the set of *Apocalypse Now*. And who could be wilder than swash-buckling Errol Flynn, who takes on all comers in MGM/UA's \$19.98 titles *Gentleman Jim*, *The Dawn Patrol*, *Edge of Darkness*, *Dive Bomber* and *Adventures of Don Juan*.

Other features made more affordable include the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce collection of Sherlock Holmes mysteries, \$14.98 each from CBS/Fox; first-time directors' efforts *Rush* and *The Indian Runner* from MGM/UA; Easter titles *The Father Clements Story* and *The Fourth Wise Man*, \$19.98 from LIVE and Vestron; Columbia TriStar's Oscar-winning *Darling*, \$19.95, and *The Natural*, \$14.95; and Paramount's \$19.95 *Frankie & Johnny* and *The Naked Gun 2-1/2: The Smell of Fear*. —APB

Compiled by April P. Bernard

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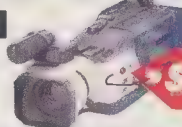
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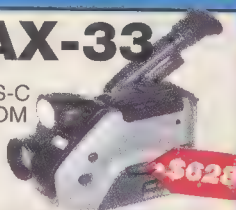


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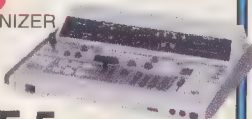
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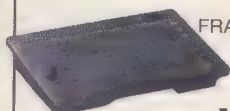
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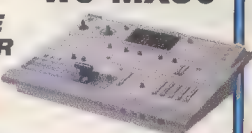
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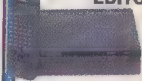
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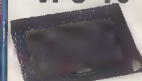
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1976. Geory Desmoucheaux, Philippe Gold-
man; dir. Francois Truffaut. From the
mouths of babes in a French village comes
every emotion under the sun. A treat.
With trailer. Mono, subtitled. (PG) 105
min. LD \$34.98. MGM/UA.

The Story of David (Parts I and II)

1976. Timothy Bottoms, Anthony Quayle,
Jane Seymour; dirs. Alex Segal, David
Lowell Rich. Respectful, well-done depic-
tion of biblical stories, with part one
devoted to Goliath, part two to Bathsheba.
Also released: *The Story of Jacob & Joseph*.
Mono. (PG) 191 min. VHS only, \$59.95.
Columbia TriStar.

Under Siege

1992. Steven Seagal, Tommy Lee Jones,
Gary Busey; dir. Andrew Davis. With \$80
million in business, this action flick showed
that Seagal could flex his muscles at the
box office, too. Surround, cc. (R) 100 min.
VHS, Sp.-subtitled VHS, Beta \$94.99.
8mm \$29.98. LD (letterboxed) \$29.98.
Warner.

Wind

1992. Matthew Modine, Jennifer Grey, Cliff
Robertson; dir. Carroll Ballard. Breathtak-
ing cinematography buoys this otherwise
flimsy account of U.S. sailors struggling to
win the America's Cup back from the Aus-
sies. Surround, cc. (PG-13) 140 min. VHS
priced for rental. 8mm \$29.95. LD \$34.95.
Columbia TriStar.

COMEDY

Bebe's Kids

1992. Anim. Voices of Nell Carter, Tone
Loc. Four kids add more than a touch of
mayhem to a date. Based on characters
created by comedian Robin Harris. Stereo,
cc. (PG-13) 74 min. VHS, Beta priced for
rental. Paramount.

Captain Ron

1992. Kurt Russell, Martin Short, Mary Kay
Place; dir. Thom Eberhardt. Speaking of
seasick... Surround, cc. (PG-13) 99 min.
VHS, Beta \$94.95. Touchstone.

Charles Chaplin:

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1914-17. B&W. 6 vols. Reissue follows prog-
ress from the slapstick of Keystone Studios,
through Essanay, to those Mutual two-
reelers that anticipated the classic features.
Mono. 56-101 min. each. VHS only, \$19.95
each. Kino (800-562-3330).

Mr. Saturday Night

1992. Billy Crystal, David Paymer, Julie
Warner, Helen Hunt; dir. Crystal. The life
and times of comedian Buddy Young Jr.
Surround, cc. (R) 118 min. VHS priced for
rental. LD \$39.99. New Line.

KIDVID

Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland

1992. Anim. Voices of Mickey Rooney,
Rene Auberjonois, Gabriel Damon; dir.
William Hurtz. Whimsical tale based on
Winsor McCay's 1905 comic strip, the first
published in the U.S. Stereo, cc. (G) 85
min. VHS, Sp.-dubbed VHS \$24.95. LD
\$34.95. Hemdale.

SHOOTOUT

continued from page 30

rect for shake—and usually did a great
job. It worked smoothly on all axes.
There was no visible difference between
normal and stabilized images, and it
wasn't fooled by the swinging arm.

However, it didn't fare as well in
hands-on testing. Clark found it dis-
played a tendency to drift horizontally at
the end of a pan shot. When he stopped
moving, the image kept moving for a
second or two. You'll want to shut the
stabilizer off before panning.

The Canon L1 10x lens uses a larger
prism than the Sony TR101, which
smooths out the lens' response. The ex-
tra weight of the camcorder also helped
smooth the vibrations of our machine
and of Clark's shooting arm. However,
the bulky prism makes the Canon sys-
tem a bit sluggish compared to the Sony.
But this easygoing manner works in its
favor on the mechanical arm, where it
placed a close second to the Hitachi.

Clark liked the Canon system almost
as much as the Sony. He noticed that,
like the Hitachi, it tended to drift. The
weight of the bulky lens bothered him
greatly, but he considered it a superb sys-
tem otherwise.

Overall, we give the nod to the
Sony. It offers good performance with
few compromises, and is the only one of
the systems we'd leave on all the time.
But we'd rather have any of these than
do without. Despite their limitations,
you'll find them useful for many types of
shots. And if they fail, you can always
turn them off.

HOME THEATER

continued from page 24

much or too often to compensate for a
fuzzy picture, the RGB focus probably
needs adjustment.

Unless your projector was thorough-
ly set up by a qualified technician at the
time of installation, any of these settings
might be out of whack. It takes a techni-
cian about an hour to properly tune a
projection set, so if yours was delivered
without a lengthy, thorough setup,
you're not getting the quality you paid
for. If you're shopping for a rear-screen
projector, insist that the dealer include a
thorough setup on delivery. If you've had
your set for a while and it's not perform-
ing as well as you think it should be, a
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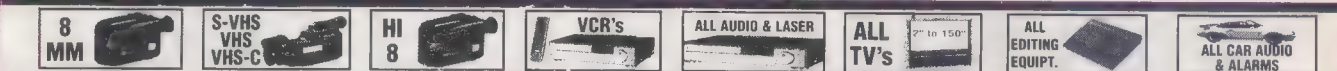
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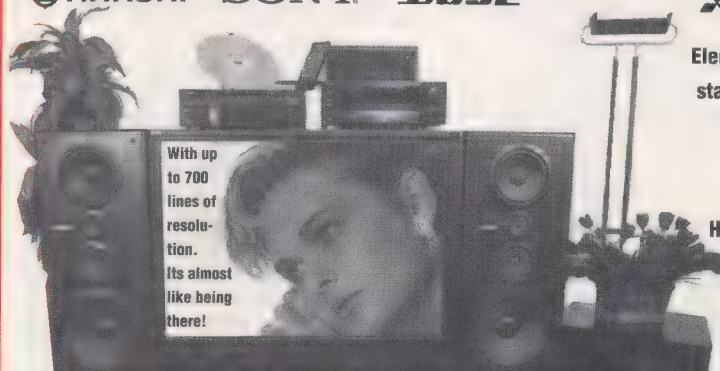
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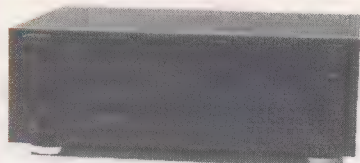


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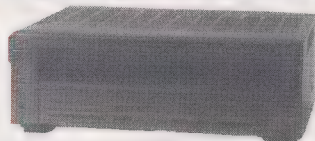
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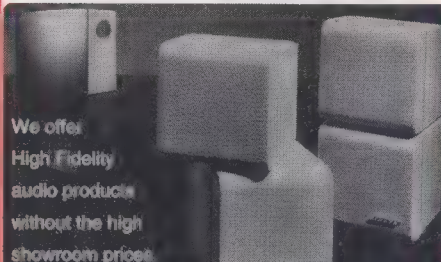
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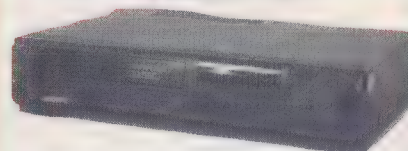
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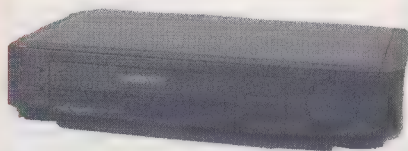
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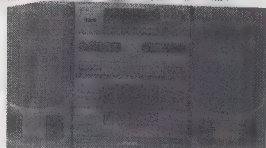
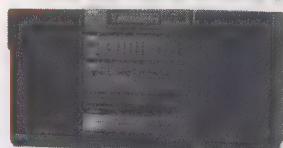


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My family loves a book called *The Prince of Central Park* by Evan Rhodes, and I recently learned it was made into a movie starring T.J. Hargrave and Ruth Gordon. Does anyone have a video copy of this wonderful story?

Tory Vollrath
4129 Council Crest
Madison, WI 53711

I've tried very unsuccessfully to locate VHS copies of two films: *Magnificent Obsession* with Robert Taylor and Irene Dunne, and *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* starring Robert Mitchum and Deborah Kerr. Please write:

Robert Castagnola
712 Laurent Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

My life—and my collection of Peter Sellers movies—would be complete if someone could furnish *Undercovers Hero*, which was shown on cable in the early '80s. I will pay all costs for a copy in any format.

Paul Ryan
9224 Rutherford
Detroit, MI 48228

I'm desperately looking for a VHS copy of a *Hard Copy* segment on B-movie "scream queens." It aired during the week of April 19-24, 1992. SP please.

Randy Hook
Rural Route 1
Sydenham
Ontario, Canada K0H 2T0

About a year ago I inadvertently taped another program over the first half of Mozart's *Escape From the Seraglio*, a Salzburg Festival production which was broadcast on *Great Performances* in the spring of 1990. I would be thrilled to death to own this performance again, and will reimburse expenses for a copy.

Sylvia Asturias
2160 Longreen Road
Kingsport, TN 37660

Our power went off during Candice Bergen's tribute to her father. This Edgar Bergen special aired on TNN and lasted about six hours. Did anyone copy it?

James Fishel
137 Fifth Street, N.W.
New Philadelphia, OH 44663

Wish You Were Here was a short-lived CBS series from the summer of 1990. The principal character gave up his job and traveled through Europe with his camcorder, sending back videotaped "postcards" to friends and family. I will reimburse expenses for VHS copies of any or all episodes.

Ev Brown
Box 296
Salt Lake City, UT 84110

I would appreciate hearing from anyone with a copy of the old English film *School for Scoundrels*, with Alastair Sim and Terry-Thomas. It's based on the book *One-Upmanship*.

Marjorie C. Mahoney
8860 Robb Road
Fowlerville, MI 48836

A homely woman marries a womanizer, who throws her into an alligator-infested swamp. Though presumed dead, the woman survives and, after many operations, becomes a top model. She then sets out for revenge. I'll pay for tapes and mailing expenses for this miniseries, which is set in Australia, and for the miniseries V as well.

Mary Merklings
Box 249
Lakeview, AR 72642

I am interested in any tapes of *Night Gallery* with Rod Serling, not Gary Collins, as the host. I'll reimburse expenses.

Randy Bentley
Box 148
Hueysville, KY 41640

I am looking for a top-quality copy of *An Evening With Fred Astaire* and its follow-up, *Another Evening With Fred Astaire*. He danced with Barrie Chase in both specials. I will reimburse expenses for VHS copy at SP speed.

Ross A. Whited
Box 80726
Fairbanks, AK 99708-0726

I scan the TV guide weekly but to no avail: I can't find one of my favorite movies, *Evil Roy Slade*, a made-for-TV western parody starring John Astin and Dick Shawn. It was made in 1971, and I'll pay expenses for a good VHS copy.

Glen Mosby
19422 Scobey Avenue
Carson, CA 90746

I'm looking for anything by Jean Shepherd, especially his films on PBS, and am willing to reimburse expenses.

Thomas Call
339 Cabot Street
Beverly, MA 01915

I would launch a thousand ships for a copy of *Helen of Troy* with Brigitte Bardot. I'd also be ecstatic to get *The Brides of Dracula*, *The Anniversary* with Bette Davis and *Sudden Fear* with Joan Crawford. For a VHS tape at SP speed, I'll gladly reimburse all costs, exchange one of my tapes for one of yours, or copy your tape and return it ASAP.

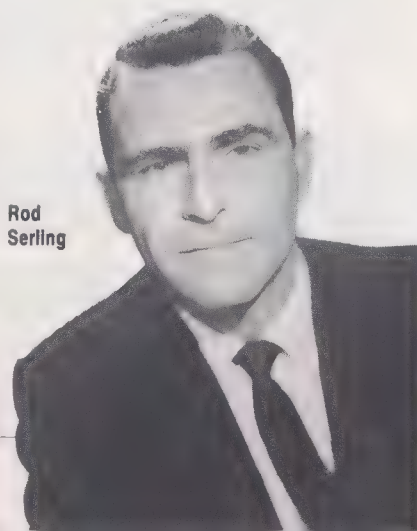
Ron Larsen
1675 Clay Street, Garden Apartment
San Francisco, CA 94109

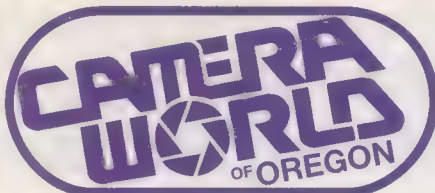
I am trying to locate *Intergalactic Christmas*, an hour-long cartoon that appeared on television in (I think) the 1970s. I will reimburse expenses or trade tapes.

Lucy Takeda
47 Barcelona Circle
Fairfield, CA 94533-2810

Send those requests for hard-to-find tapes to Collector's Clearinghouse, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001. Video Magazine DOES NOT locate tapes. This is a reader-to-reader service only, so please do not send a self-addressed envelope. Requests for copyrighted material must be for personal use only. You may offer to reimburse expenses, but the Clearinghouse is not open to requests for the purchase or sale of tapes.

Rod
Serling





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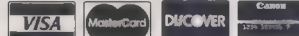
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PV-4101 4 Head Call
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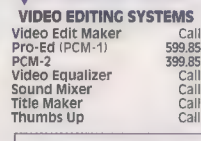
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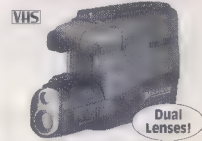
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AG-195

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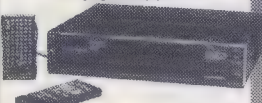
AG-1970

AGA96

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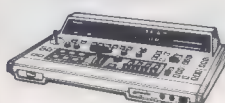
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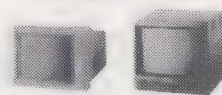
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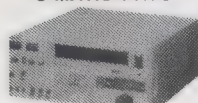
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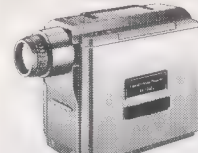
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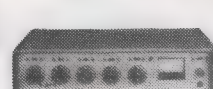
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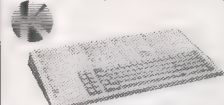
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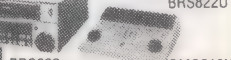
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TECHNOLOGY

continued from page 39

responsible for color intensity. It may be measured either in a composite video signal, as it was for VHS and 8mm tapes, or in the separate chrominance signal available at an S-video output.

Luma S/N is similar to the video S/N ratio in that it's a measure of how much electronic noise is added in the recording process, but on the luminance or brightness signal, which is separated from the chrominance signal in Hi8 and S-VHS tapes. The signals are available in separated form at the S-video outputs used in Hi8 and S-VHS machines.

Since Hi8 and S-VHS tapes use wider bands of the frequency spectrum than 8mm and VHS tapes, they can deliver more picture detail. Measuring the output loss at 5 MHz is a way of testing how well Hi8 and S-VHS tapes do this part of their job. The characteristic is a measure of the strength of a demodulated signal equivalent to 400 lines of horizontal resolution. It indicates how much the tape contributes to the sharpness of the video image. The higher the

number, the better the tape's performance.

For the S-VHS tapes, we measured only the linear audio response since the hi-fi response varies negligibly from tape to tape.

Our tests demonstrate that not all tapes are created equal, even though overall quality has been steadily improving. Use our charts and recommendations to select a better grade of tape than the one you may be using, or to affirm the correctness of your present choice. It's the quickest, simplest step you can take to improve the quality and consistency of your home videos. ■

TAPE TESTS 2

continued from page 36

ventional 8mm camcorder that uses the larger, "shoe-style" design.

TVS AND VCRS

Widescreen was the big story in TVs, but there were other developments, notably the spread of closed captioning, which will soon be required in all TV sets 13 inches and larger. Even

the sighted should find closed captioning useful, especially with some manufacturers taking advantage of the requirement to add companion features like trilingual menu systems, newswire access, memory of onscreen memos and calendars for events like birthdays.

Most TV sets were variations of earlier models with new cabinets. But there were some exceptions. Panasonic has extended the flattened faceplate of its SuperFlat TVs to more models, and added the name GAOO, the marketing moniker used in Japan. Proton, which introduces new models only occasionally, has two new 27-inch sets, including one with PIP, and a sleek 20-incher.

The talk of the show in VCRs was dual-well models. Vista International is promising a new entry called the Intelstar this summer, while Go-Video, which has had the field to itself in the U.S., is expanding its line from one to seven, starting with the Horizon GV3050, a four-head, hi-fi deck that lets users set the two tapes to record sequentially, yielding four hours at the SP speed.

VCR Plus is being incorporated into more models, including some by Sharp,

continued on page 88

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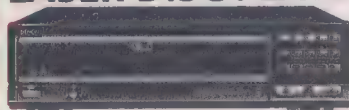


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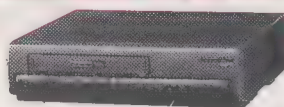
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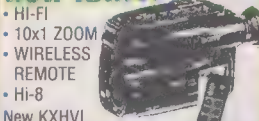


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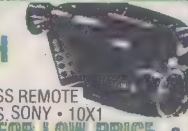
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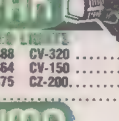
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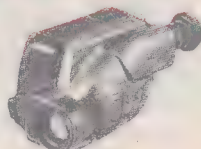
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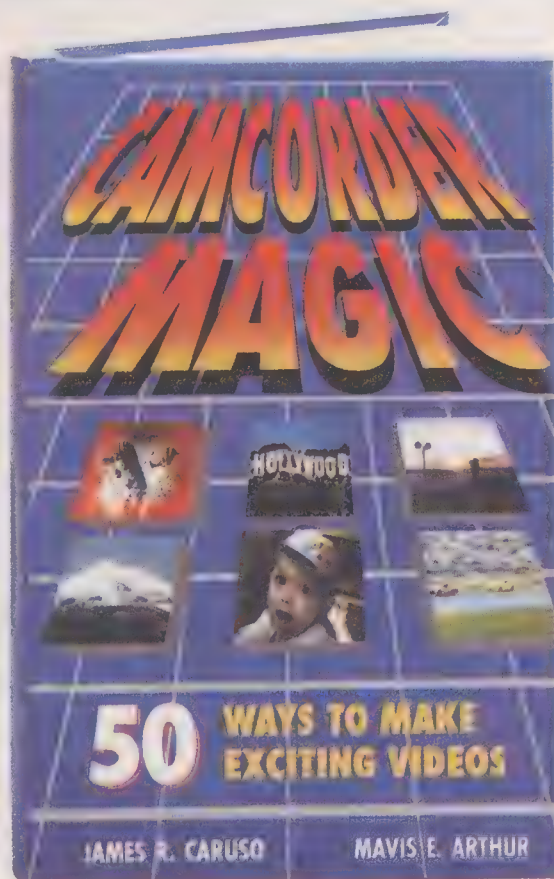
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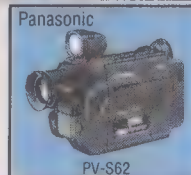
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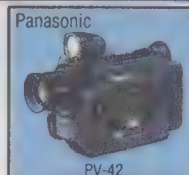
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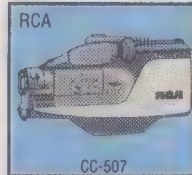
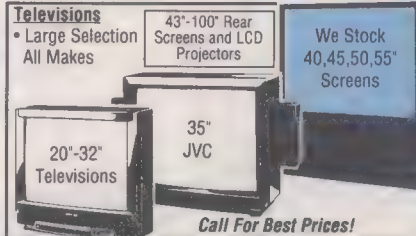
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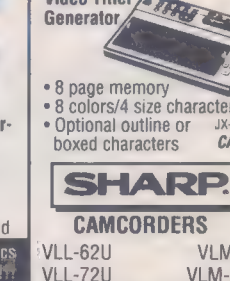
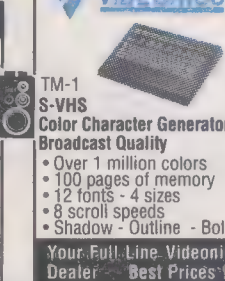
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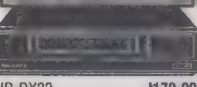
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VIDEO Reader Service Card

VIDEO Reader Service Card

Name _____
(please print)
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone Number (with Area Code) _____

1. Do you currently own a laserdisc player? Yes ☐ A No ☐ B
2. Do you plan to purchase one within the coming year? Yes ☐ C No ☐ D
3. How many titles do you/would you purchase per year on laserdisc?
1-5 ☐ E 6-25 ☐ F More than 25 ☐ G
4. Where do you currently purchase laserdiscs?
Chain Store ☐ H Specialty Store ☐ I Mail Order ☐ J
5. Do you currently rent laserdiscs?
Yes ☐ K No ☐ L Rental not available ☐ M
6. How familiar are you with the availability of new and upcoming laserdisc product?
Can't seem to find information about laserdiscs ☐ N
Somewhat aware of new releases and availability ☐ O
Very aware of all laserdisc releases ☐ P
7. Would you be interested in receiving monthly new release information?
Yes ☐ R No ☐ S
8. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? Yes ☐ T No ☐ U

Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Card expires 7/19/93 RS 493

Name _____
(please print)
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Telephone Number (with Area Code) _____

1. Do you currently own a laserdisc player? Yes ☐ A No ☐ B
2. Do you plan to purchase one within the coming year? Yes ☐ C No ☐ D
3. How many titles do you/would you purchase per year on laserdisc?
1-5 ☐ E 6-25 ☐ F More than 25 ☐ G
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Yes ☐ K No ☐ L Rental not available ☐ M
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Somewhat aware of new releases and availability ☐ O
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Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
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136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

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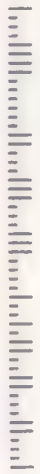


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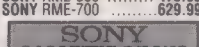
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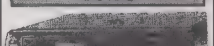
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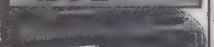
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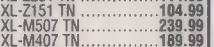
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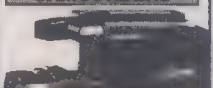
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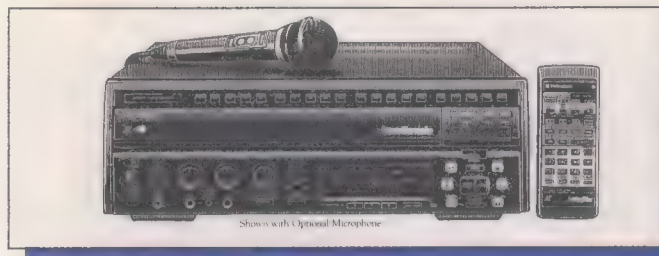
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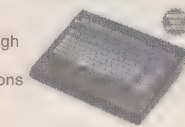
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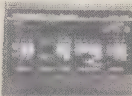
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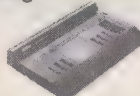


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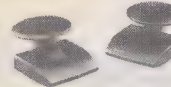
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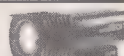
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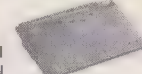


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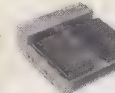


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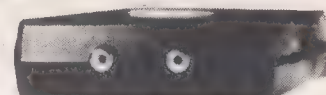
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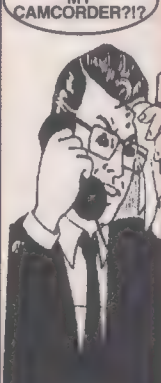
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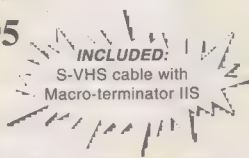
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#1
Customer
Satisfaction

continued from page 67

a new convert, while Panasonic has added its Program Director feature and Super Quasi Playback of S-VHS tapes to all models. Emerson added an intriguing new feature to all its VCRs—a head maintenance indicator, which flashes when head cleaning is recommended.

For videophiles, the most appealing introductions were two Panasonic S-VHS VCRs, the \$649 PV-S4366 and the \$1,099 PV-S4380. Both focus on picture quality, with noise reduction for both chrominance and luminance, and new DynAmorphous heads said to improve video signal-to-noise ratio by 5 percent. Both carry the Program Director and VCR Plus. The PV-S4380 adds a full complement of editing features and a digital timebase corrector.

LASERDISCS

Pioneer chose CES to debut the laserdisc format's first major hardware development since side-changing players. The company's new LaserActive system plays LDs and CDs like other combi players, but also includes a port on the bottom left of the front panel that accepts three different "control packs" for a new range of capabilities.

The Mega-LD control pack renders the player compatible with Sega CDs and Genesis cartridges, while the LD-ROM pack offers access to TurboGrafx CDs and cartridges. Attached to the packs are handheld controllers for each game system. Additionally, these two control packs will allow the use of eight- and 12-inch LaserActive software, a new multimedia format that will incorporate laserdisc's outstanding full-motion video and still-frames. A karaoke pack instantly transforms the player for those sing-along extravaganzas.

The LaserActive system will be available this fall at prices still to be determined, but Pioneer says the control packs will be available separately from the basic player for gradual expansion. A variety of LaserActive multimedia discs will be introduced at the same time.

Yamaha's new combi player, the \$699 CDV-870, places special emphasis on sound quality. It features Yamaha's proprietary S-Bit Plus digital-to-analog converter—made popular by the company's extensive line of CD players—plus a newly designed timebase corrector and onscreen menus. Panasonic's new \$800 LX-600 replaces the company's middle-of-the-line LX-200 side-changing player. It adds a jog/shuttle dial, reduces access time and improves signal-to-noise ratios.

Aiwa displayed an LD/karaoke player intended "for future introduction" that would cause quite a stir in Holly-

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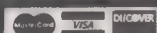


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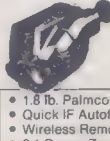
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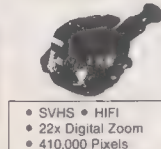
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wood if it ever does become available. The CV-X800 reportedly plays NTSC laserdiscs on PAL TVs, which would allow European movie buffs to watch discs of hit U.S. movies *before* they opened theatrically in Europe. We don't expect to see this one at the local superstore any time soon.

MULTIMEDIA

CES insiders started the show talking about multimedia thanks to Pioneer's LaserActive announcement, but the multimedia buzz grew to a fever pitch with the news of the 3DO company and its "interactive multiplayer."

To be introduced in the fall, the basic 3DO system will look a lot like existing CD-I and CDTV multimedia players. The difference, according to 3DO CEO Trip Hawkins, will be a new level of quality: A 32-bit graphics/animation architecture will process images 50 times faster than existing CD-ROM-based systems, animating up to 64 million pixels per second. 3DO claims the player will display 16 million colors.

The size and stature of the companies behind 3DO lent a special aura to its introduction. Time-Warner, Matsushita, AT&T, MCA and Electronic Arts are all backing 3DO with their considerable resources and clout. This unique partnership of hardware, software and communications companies could provide the means to get the new format off the ground and into America's living rooms—3DO hopes to become a world-wide standard on the order of VHS.

The fact that two major Hollywood studios—Warner and Universal—are owned by companies backing 3DO may

one day be key to 3DO's success. At its introduction, the system will handle full-motion video via add-on hardware. If and when the time comes to put movies on five-inch discs, 3DO will surely be ready.

Philips declined to exhibit its CD-I system on the show floor as it did at last summer's CES in Chicago, but it did announce a new CD-I player. Philips has simplified internal components to give the new CDI220 a much slimmer cabinet than the previous model, the CDI910. The price is \$699, and the player should be reaching stores about now. Philips will continue to offer a free Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia disc to all CD-I purchasers.

VIDEOGAMES

Adults have long played a big part in the success of videogames, but have been largely ignored by game makers. The tide seems to be turning—CES offered several games with new technology and more mature premises that may bring more post-teens to the field.

Jaleco introduced the first videogame with Dolby Surround sound, *King Arthur's World*, for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. Plug an SNES into your A/V receiver, and the game produces amazingly clear and pronounced surround effects.

Nintendo showed *Star Fox*, the first game with FX technology, which puts some of the graphics chips into the game cartridge itself. This new fighter simulation game moves much faster than other polygon-rendering simulation games we've tried. At CES, Nintendo heightened the sound effects by mounting sub-

woofers in the chairs players sat in, making the game literally a kick in the pants.

Sega showed the latest software for its new Sega CD system, including discs that allow you to assemble your own music video with the help of INXS and Kris Kross. New "Virtual VCR" discs provide random-access, low-resolution motion video in a window—the first is a collection of Prince videos. The company also showed *Virtua Racing*, an arcade game that uses a 16:9 widescreen monitor. U.S. Gold took aim at Sega cartridge fans with *Flashback: The Quest for Identity*, a sci-fi shoot-'em-up notable for realistic character movement, an effect achieved by filming live actors, then hand-animating their movements onto animation cels.

The Duo, a newer, more capable version of Turbo Technology's TurboGrafx-CD platform, is being repositioned for adults. It plays all the old TurboGrafx cartridges and discs, and adds several new games with more gore and realism than typical shoot-'em-ups. Some of the games even carry warning labels. The Duo can be equipped with a \$70 SCSI interface that allows it to be used as a CD-ROM drive with IBM PC, Apple Macintosh and Commodore Amiga computers.

Action-movie fans should watch for two outstanding SNES games based on *Alien*—Akklaim's *Alien 3*, a realistic rendition of Sigourney Weaver's latest run-in with the belly-busters, and Activision's *Aliens vs. Predator*, which (for those who've always wondered) pits the creatures from each movie against each other. ■

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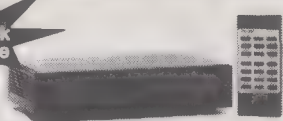
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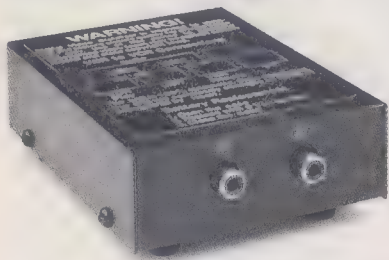
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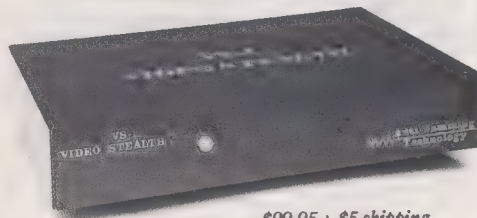
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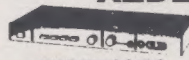
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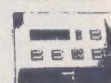
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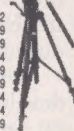
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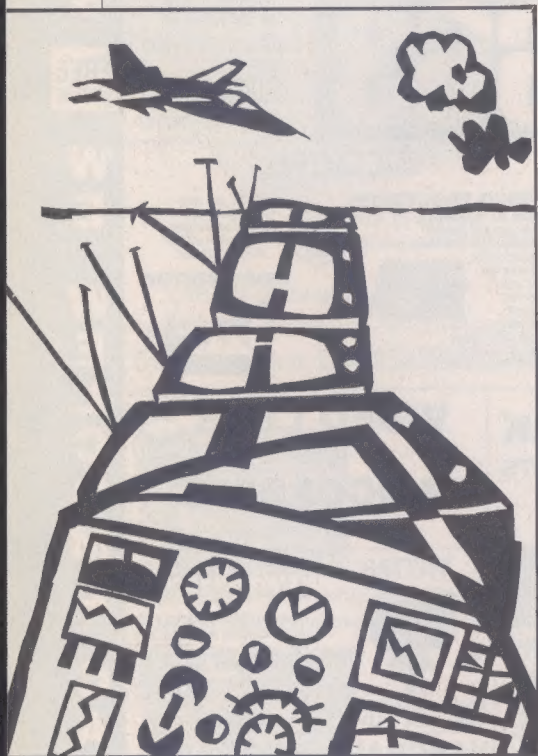
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OFF THE AIR

Stealth video (& other peace dividends)

BY JIM BARRY

There was a genuine example of what I'd classify as a "peace dividend" at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this winter. You've heard a lot about this phenomenon in the months since the Berlin Wall crumbled and the cold war ended. Now we're beginning to see some practical and surprising effects as high-tech defense firms apply their energies to video-related consumer products.



It's only logical that electronics is a prime area for conversion — you know, using cutting-edge technology to deliver information and entertainment into America's homes rather than to guide smart bombs into Saddam's smokestacks. But it's satisfying to witness the transformation.

Over the years the U.S. electronics industry has received more than its share of flak — some deserved — say, for "losing" its consumer market to offshore suppliers. What's often unsaid is that many companies were more than happy to cede the low-margin consumer business to whomever from wherever while they plied the lucrative defense electronics waters, fueled by cold war rhetoric, tax dollars and, occasionally, flat-out wrong assessments of Soviet capabilities.

It's been pointed out that while the best engineering graduates from Tokyo University go to Sony or Toyota, the best engineering graduates from MIT or Cal Tech go to Raytheon or Hughes Aircraft.

Now this may change. "The U.S. builds the best nuclear submarines, the best missile systems, the best tanks in the world," noted Frank Myers, then chairman of the Electronic Industries Association, at last summer's CES. "But this country no longer needs as many submarines, missiles or tanks. What we do need is a new generation of consumer products, like HDTV receivers, digital audio receivers, interactive learning and educational devices, and assistive devices for the disabled."

As a nation, we better get down to it, Myers said, citing federal projections that between 500,000 and one million private-sector defense jobs will disappear by 1995. "Unless those jobs can be replaced by equally skilled and salaried positions in the consumer and commercial markets," Myers warned, "this country's economic recovery will remain lackluster at best."

Since Myers made those observations, we've experienced the stirrings of a new world order, a sobering budget deficit and a new administration, which says it's committed to converting our economy from a defense footing to a rebuilding mode. Can all this also usher in a new era of consumer electronics development from U.S.-based companies? I believe the answer is yes.

On a very large scale there are companies like Hughes, which is investing

\$500 million in DirectTv, a direct-broadcast satellite enterprise that will use the company's technological prowess to deliver a consumer product it hopes will be in millions of American homes within a few years' time. Hughes, of course, is already a leading player in the commercial satellite business (a previous outgrowth of its defense expertise). It has also dipped a toe into the consumer market with its SRS Sound Retrieval System and a co-venture with JVC to make liquid-crystal light valve projectors.

Other companies large and small are using technology developed for flight simulators and other aspects of wargaming to bring to market a new generation of virtual-reality software programs. It's the small companies, economists tell us, where real job growth emanates, and there are many creative, innovative engineers and scientists at tiny firms seeking ways to beat high-tech swords into electronic plowshares.

We saw this type of innovative technology conversion at CES in a demonstration of Snell Acoustics' new Concept VI Hybrid DSP Loudspeaker System. According to Kevin Voecks, Snell's chief engineer, his new system uses stealth technology to redefine the boundaries of loudspeaker technology by including the acoustics of the listening room itself. "Loudspeakers are the weakest link of any actual sound system component, while room acoustics are the weakest link in a broader sense," Voecks notes. "The listening room itself remains the biggest barrier to accuracy in reproduced sound."

Using the spatial formulas that were developed to make airplanes disappear on radar, the new Snell loudspeakers generate mirror-image cancellation signals that minimize the negative effects of ceiling and wall reflections.

Snell's president William Osgood sees this as the possible beginning of a whole new ballgame. "If we can learn to commercialize the wizardry of our defense industries," Osgood points out, "we can begin to reclaim the consumer electronics industry."



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